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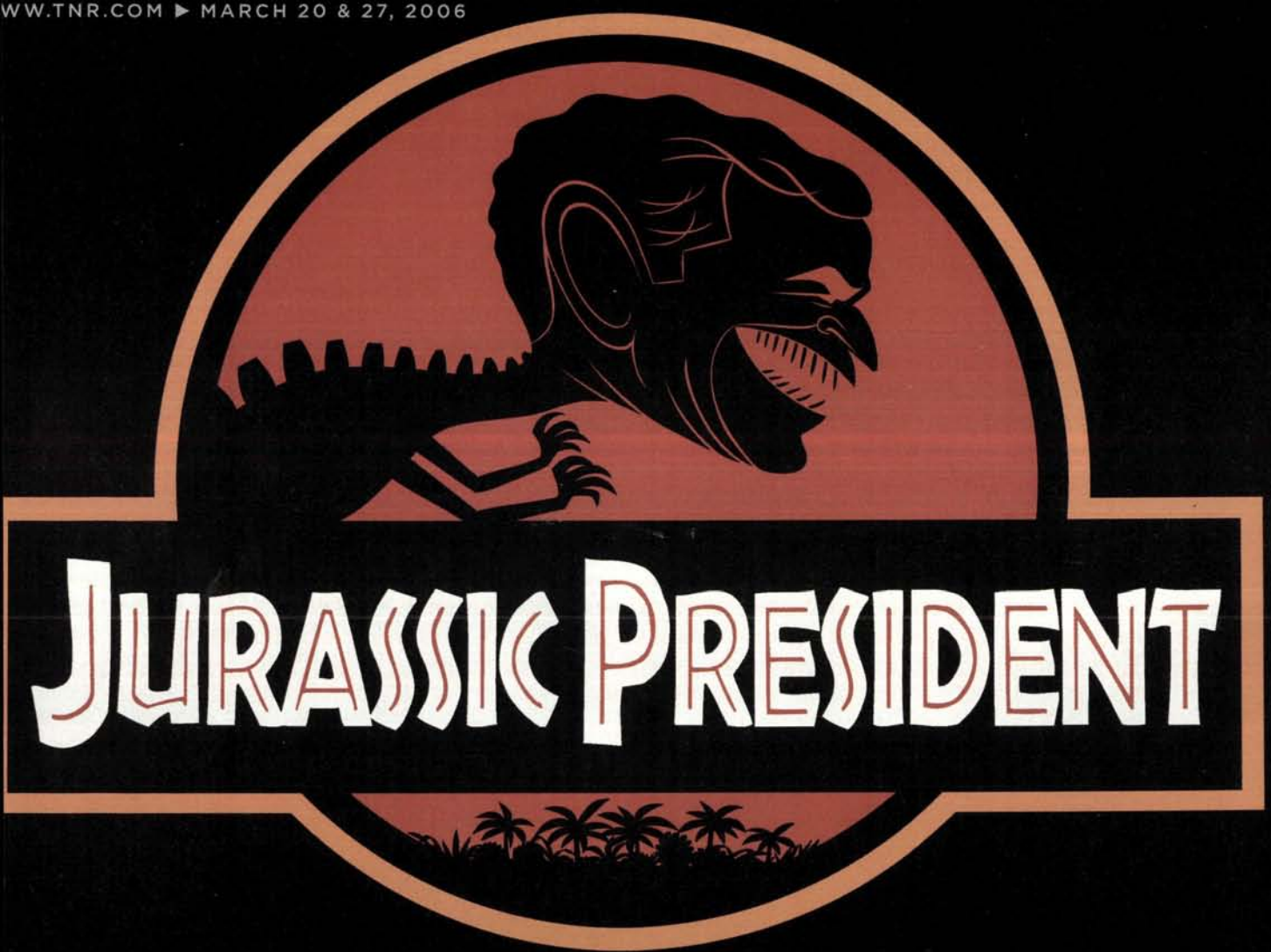

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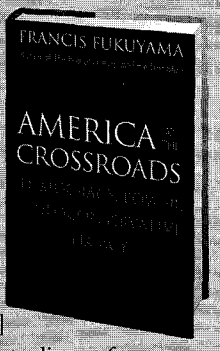
Francis Fukuyama



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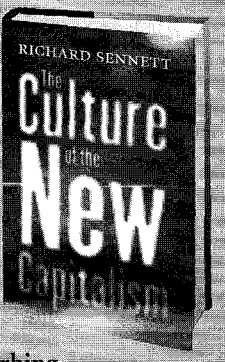

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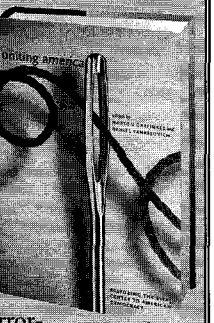

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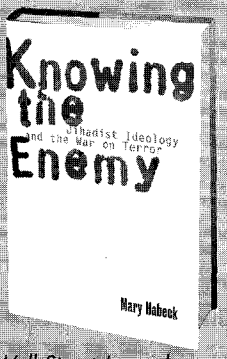

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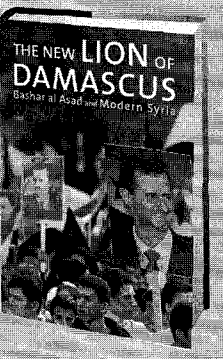

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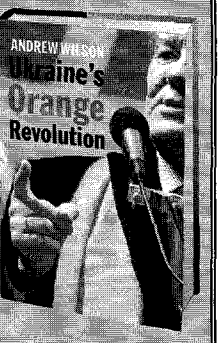

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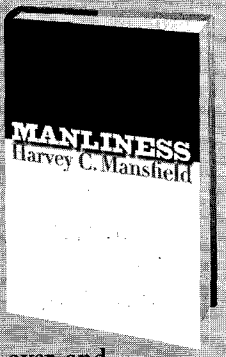

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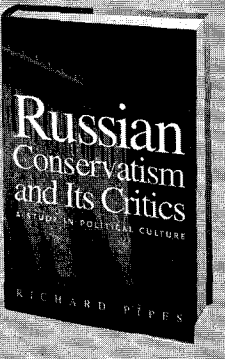

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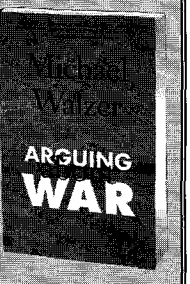

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
A JOURNAL OF POLITICS AND THE ARTS

MARCH 20 & 27, 2006 WASHINGTON, D.C. ISSUES 4,757 & 4,758 VOLUME 234

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CORRESPONDENCE

WELFARE'S WELFARE

YOUR EDITORIAL BIZARRELY ASSERTS that, of the $40 billion budget reconciliation bill, "the vast majority of cuts affect the poor" ("Standard and Poor," February 20). When did student loans ($12.6 billion), spectrum receipts ($7.4 billion), Medicare ($6.4 billion), corporate pension fees ($3.6 billion), or farm subsidies ($2.7 billion) become programs for the poor? Sure, Medicaid reforms ($4.7 billion, which will reduce the program's five-year growth rate from 45.5 percent to 44 percent) count as antipoverty reforms, but that is not the "vast majority" of $40 billion. The editorial's overall argument—that antipoverty spending has been slashed—is also incorrect. Antipoverty spending leaped by 39 percent from 2001 to 2005, thanks to large increases in food stamps (71 percent), Medicaid (40 percent), and refundable earned income tax credits and child tax credit subsidies (81 percent). Overall antipoverty spending reached a record 16.3 percent of the federal budget in 2004. Perhaps the editors should read the legislation and examine antipoverty spending trends before trotting out the heartless Republican budget-cutter stereotype.

BRIAN RIEDL
Fellow
The Heritage Foundation
Washington, D.C.

THE EDITORS RESPOND:

Brian Riedl's numbers are highly misleading. Overall, federal poverty spending has increased because the number of poor Americans has grown. The statistic to consult here is real per capita spending on the poor—that is, what the average poor person receives in benefits. According to a recent report by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, that number has increased, on average, by a mere 1.9 percent per year under Bush. Once you further adjust for spiraling health care costs, the volume of services received by the average poor person shrinks even further than this number suggests.

RECOUNT

MARTIN PERETZ IS WRONG THAT "Perot took votes away from Bush

41 in 1992 and thereby gave the election to Clinton" ("Perotists," February 27). In fact, both exit poll data and survey research concerning the 1992 election indicate that, had Perot not been in the race, his supporters would have stayed home or voted in roughly equal numbers for George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton. Even if Perot's candidacy were more detrimental to Bush than to Clinton in a few states, his absence would not have erased Clinton's margin in the Electoral College. Assuming a commensurate Electoral College gain, for Peretz's statement to be true, roughly 65 percent of the Perot vote would have had to go to Bush in an election in which Clinton's margin over Bush was 7 percent (53.5 percent to 46.5 percent) in the two-party vote. Such a scenario is unlikely given that strong third-party candidates tend to appear in elections in which the incumbent administration is highly unpopular.

JOHN H. MCCORMICK
Bethesda, Maryland

SCHOOL OF LIFE

NOAM SCHEIBER'S PIECE ON THE appointment of Kevin Warsh to the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System was way off the mark ("Force Fed," March 6). Warsh's achievements at a relatively young age (35) should be applauded rather than treated as a point of contention. Since when did THE NEW REPUBLIC believe in age discrimination? Regarding educational background, while a Ph.D. in economics is useful for Fed Board service, it's certainly not a critical requirement. Proof of intellectual ability is. Warsh's undergraduate degree from Stanford and law degree from Harvard are excellent academic credentials. Paul Volcker didn't have a Ph.D. in economics. William McChesney Martin, the longest-serving Fed chairman in history, was a Yale graduate in English and Latin. In terms of professional experience, the nearly seven years Warsh worked at Morgan Stanley learning the ropes of corporate finance and market behavior provide skills urgently needed by this particular Fed.

MANUEL H. JOHNSON
Former Vice Chairman
Federal Reserve Board
Washington, D.C.

NOAM SCHEIBER RESPONDS:

Proof of intellectual ability may be a necessary condition for appointment to the Fed Board, but it is not a sufficient one. Sufficient conditions include lots of relevant knowledge and experience, both of which Warsh lacks. As it happens, William McChesney Martin had these in droves. Martin, after all, had been president of the New York Stock Exchange, head of the U.S. Export-Import Bank, and assistant Treasury secretary for monetary affairs before joining the Fed. Warsh had at best been a mid-ranking employee at Morgan Stanley and a midlevel White House aide. I don't doubt that Warsh is a bright, hardworking guy. But, if that qualifies someone to be a Fed governor, then millions of people are qualified. ■

THE NEW REPUBLIC (ISSN 0028-6583), Vol. 234, Numbers 10 & 11, Issues 4,757 & 4,758, March 20 & 27, 2006. (Printed in the United States on March 9, 2006.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated March 20 & 27, June 5 & 12, July 10 & 17, August 14 & 21, September 11 & 18, and November 27 & December 4, 2006) at 1331 H Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005. Telephone (202) 508-4444. For advertising inquiries, please contact Grant Loomis at (202) 508-4444 or our NY sales office at (212) 466-8447. Yearly subscriptions, $79.97; foreign, $119.97 (U.S. funds); Canada, $99.97 (U.S. funds). Back issues, $8.00 domestic and $10.00 foreign/Canada (includes postage & handling). © 2005 by The New Republic, LLC. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Rights and permissions: fax (202) 628-9383. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. For hard copy reprints, call (202) 508-4444. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, and CD-ROM are available through ProQuest, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone (800) 521-0600. Postmaster: Send changes of address to The New Republic, P.O. Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope (e-mail address: letters@tnr.com). For subscription inquiries or problems call (800) 827-1289 or visit our website at www.thenewrepublic.com.

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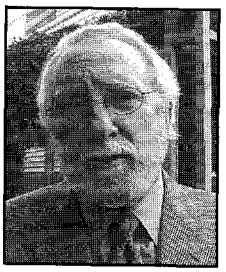
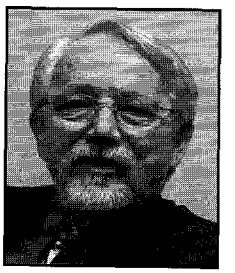
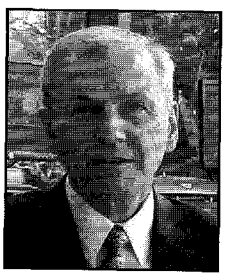


Chief Norm Stamper
Seattle Police Dept. (ret.)
"The Drug War has arguably been the single most devastating, dysfunctional social policy since slavery."



Lt. Jack Cole
New Jersey State Police (ret.)
12 years undercover narcotics
"Over a thousand young people went to jail as a direct result of what I did out there as one undercover agent...something I'm certainly not proud of today."

Capt. Peter Christ
Tonawanda NY Police Dept. (ret.)
"What happens when you arrest a drug dealer? Nothing. Nothing changes."



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Walter Cronkite

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War College

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

HILLARY CLINTON, congratulations. You're the lucky recipient of a winning political issue, which has the added virtue of being morally important. Send your thanks to Columbia University and the U.S. Supreme Court.

This week, the Court unanimously upheld the Solomon Amendment, which denies government funding to universities that prohibit military recruiting on campus. The ruling's practical implications aren't entirely clear, but they thrust an old, ugly issue back into the national spotlight: the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC).

For 90 years, ROTC has been a barometer of relations between America's elite universities and American society. In 1916, when Congress created a national system of military training on campus, East Coast, liberal arts colleges clamored to be included. As historian Michael Neiberg notes, Ivy League universities were so fearful that ROTC would be confined to land-grant schools in the South and West, giving them "a monopoly on patriotism," that students at Harvard, Princeton, Dartmouth, and Yale circulated a petition demanding that they be allowed to participate as well. And they succeeded. By 1955, every member of the Ivy League boasted its own ROTC detachment. At its height, Columbia graduated almost as many naval officers as the Naval Academy. But, in the late '60s, under pressure from the campus left, most Ivy League schools expelled ROTC. And, when Richard Nixon abolished the draft—which many people joined ROTC in order to avoid—the program lost even more luster. Today, if students at Harvard, Columbia, Brown, or Yale want to join the anime society or the frisbee team, they can do so on campus. But, if they want to serve their country, they must take the bus across town.

As it happens, the epicenter of debate in the Ivy League over ROTC is at Columbia, in Clinton's state of New York. Harvard President Larry Summers raised the issue before being dumped last month. But, ten months ago at Columbia, the university senate—composed of faculty, students, and administrators—actually took a vote. A student poll in 2003 had shown that a majority wanted the program restored. But the senate voted 53–10 to keep the ban in place. Columbia's president, Lee Bollinger, voted against ROTC. Columbia's provost, the eminent American historian Alan Brinkley, argued against letting the military return to campus. Outside the senate auditorium, some pro-ROTC students hung a banner reading A VOTE FOR ROTC IS A VOTE FOR THE HEROES OF OUR GENERATION. With the Court decision as her pretext, Senator Clinton's opportunity is clear: Go to Columbia and tell its leaders that those students are right, and they are wrong.

Politically, it's a no-brainer. The national Democratic Party grew alienated from the U.S. military at exactly the time liberal campuses began expelling ROTC. A public call for its restoration could help undermine the anti-military stereotype that still plagues the party today.

But demanding ROTC's restoration would be far more than a sop to conservative swing voters; it would signify the resurgence of a certain kind of liberalism. As Neiberg shows in his book, *Making Citizen Soldiers*, early-twentieth-century university administrators believed ROTC served a fundamentally liberal purpose. It infused the military with the spirit of intellectual openness found in the academy and thus "prevent[ed] the creation" of a narrow, isolated "military caste." When the New Left attacked ROTC during the Vietnam years, it was precisely this vision of liberal patriotism that it was trying to destroy. Groups like Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) didn't want to reform and humanize the U.S. military; they wanted the military to be as reactionary and isolated as possible so Americans would grow alienated from it. The New Left's strategy, as SDS leader Tom Hayden explained, was to "arouse the sleeping dogs on the [r]ight" and thus force Americans to choose between fascism and revolution. And, in that effort, the most illiberal forces in the U.S. military were the New Left's tacit allies. As Neiberg explains, some in the military were pleased to see ROTC expelled from the Ivy League, since they felt uncomfortable on liberal, antiwar campuses.

Today, ROTC's opponents are no longer politically radical. They're not anti-military, they insist, they just oppose its "don't ask, don't tell" policy toward gays and lesbians. They're simply treating the military the same way they treat every other organization that discriminates.

But that's exactly the problem. The military *isn't* like every other organization: Its members risk their lives to defend the United States. When such an institution discriminates, you can—and should—try to reform it from within. That's what ROTC was designed for. But, when you treat it like a pariah—while still insisting that it protect you—you have broken the contract that binds a democratic military and a democratic people.

In his speech opposing ROTC, Brinkley compared making gays serve under "don't ask, don't tell" to making blacks who serve pass for white. But, of course, Columbia embraced ROTC even when the U.S. military did discriminate against blacks. And, more important, blacks themselves enlisted in vast numbers. In so doing, they weren't endorsing racism; they were recognizing that, when a racist institution also defends your country, you have to embrace it and fight to change it at the same time.

Today, the Serviceman's Legal Defense Network—which represents gays and lesbians in the military—understands the same thing. Which is why it does not oppose ROTC on campus, even as it struggles heroically against "don't ask, don't tell." It is Bollinger and Brinkley who, by shunning the military, have placed themselves in the oppositional, anti-liberal tradition of the New Left.

And today, as in the past, some in the military are happy to oblige. What the students of the Ivy League feared in 1916 has largely come to pass: ROTC has overwhelmingly shifted to the universities of the South and West, where the military can pursue its discriminatory policies with less fear of challenge. The officer corps has become far more ideologically isolated and politically partisan than it was before Vietnam. And, not coincidentally, so have elite universities like Columbia. All of which is disastrous for the Democratic Party, and, more importantly, for American liberalism. Hillary Clinton, what are you waiting for? **PETER BEINART**

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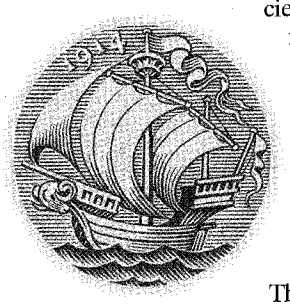
Moral Imperative

OVER THE LAST 25 years, liberalism has lost both its good name and its sway over politics. But it is liberalism's loss of imagination that is most disheartening. Since President Clinton's health care plan unraveled in 1994—a debacle that this magazine, regrettably, abetted—liberals have grown chastened and confused, afraid to think big ideas. Such reticence had its proper time and place; large-scale political and substantive failures demand introspection, not to mention humility. But it is time to be ambitious again. And the place to begin is the very spot where liberalism left off a decade ago: Guaranteeing every American citizen access to affordable, high-quality medical care.

The familiar name for this idea is "universal health care," a term that, however accurate, drains the concept of its moral resonance. Alone among the most developed nations, the United States allows nearly 16 percent of its population—46 million people—to go without health insurance. And, while it is commonly assumed that the uninsured still get medical care, statistics and anecdotes tell a different story. Across the United States today, there are diabetics skimping on their insulin, child asthmatics struggling to breathe, and cancer victims dying from undetected tumors. Studies by the Institute of Medicine suggest that thousands of people, maybe even tens of thousands, die prematurely every year because they don't have health insurance. And even those who don't suffer medical consequences face financial and emotional pain, as when seniors choose between prescriptions and groceries—or when families choose between the mortgage and hospital bills.

These are not the sorts of hardships that an enlightened society tolerates, particularly when those hardships so frequently visit people who, as the politicians like to say, "work hard and play by the rules." Yet American society has tolerated this situation for a long time. It has done so, at least in part, because the majority of working Americans still had private health insurance, generally through their jobs—the consequences of losing health coverage were, for the most part, somebody else's concern. Universal health care promised them security they already had. Change would only be for the worse.

But how many people can really count upon such security now? Precisely because working people expect to get insurance through their jobs, they are dependent upon the enthusiasm of employers to help pay for it—an enthusiasm that is waning in the face of rising medical costs and global competition. Companies have responded by reengineering their workforces to shed full-time workers that receive benefits, by redesigning their insurance plans to offer skimpier coverage, or by simply declining to offer coverage altogether. Soon, the only employers left offering generous health coverage may be the ones forced to do so by union contracts—employers like the Big Three automakers, which, when we last checked, were barely skirting bankruptcy themselves.



When such gaps in insurance have appeared previously in U.S. history, the government has stepped in to fill them. It did so most audaciously in the 1960s, when the Great Society produced Medicare and Medicaid in order to guarantee at least some coverage to the elderly and the poor—groups the employer-based system had repeatedly failed to serve. But chronically underfunded Medicaid, a program that never reached all of the uninsured, cannot accommodate the growing demand when conservatives keep cutting taxes and gutting public services. Combined with the decline of employer-sponsored coverage, this failure means that even middle-class Americans are just one downsizing away from losing health insurance altogether.

Such widespread insecurity might be understandable (though not necessarily forgivable) if it were the unavoidable consequence of an otherwise well-functioning health care system. After all, economics teaches us that tradeoffs between efficiency and equity are inevitable. But medical care in this country is inequitable *and* inefficient. The United States pays more for its health care than any other nation on the planet: 16 percent of our national wealth, at last count. Money spent on health care is money not spent on other things, like corporate investment and wages. That's an exorbitant cost that even Americans with secure health insurance pay.

"Exorbitant," to be sure, is a subjective word: Money spent on well-applied medical technology might be worth it. But, perversely, our extra spending doesn't seem to buy us better medical care. According to virtually every meaningful statistic, from simple measures like infant mortality to

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more carefully constructed data like "potential years of life lost," Americans are no healthier (and are frequently unhealthier) than the citizens of countries with universal health care. Nor do Americans always get "more" medical care, as is commonly assumed. The citizens of Japan, for example, have more CT scanners and MRI machines than we do. And the French, whose system the World Health Organization recently declared the planet's best, have more hospital beds. They get more doctor visits, too, perhaps because their access to physicians is nearly unfettered—a privilege even most middle-class Americans surrendered with the spread of managed care. In fact, aside from cost, the measure on which the United States most conspicuously stands out from other advanced nations may be public opinion: In a series of polls a few years ago, just 40 percent of us said we were "fairly or very" satisfied with our health care system, fourth worst of the 17 nations surveyed.

The last time a Republican president presided over a nation with serious health care problems, in the early '90s, he had little of consequence to say until he was about to lose reelection. And, while this Republican president talks about health care more frequently, none of what he says is particularly encouraging. To conservatives, it is axiomatic that the private sector can deliver health insurance better than the public sector. It was precisely such thinking that led Bush and the Republicans to insist that private insurers, not the government, be put in charge of providing drug coverage to seniors. The result has been chaos, with seniors baffled as they try to figure out which plans cover which drugs and, even worse, with many of the sickest and poorest Medicare beneficiaries unable to get their prescriptions during the program's early days. The only benefits the program delivers effectively, it seems, are enormous subsidies to insurance companies.

But the Medicare drug benefit is just a taste of things to come. The right's real hope for health care is to radically transform health insurance altogether, so that risk is gradually transferred away from large groups (i.e., the government and large employers) and onto individuals (i.e., you). And, while Bush promises that this approach will empower consumers by offering them more choices, the effect would be just the opposite. Insurance works best when large numbers of people share risk, so that modest premiums from a large number of healthy people cover the very high medical costs incurred, at any one time, by just a few. Enacting the conservative agenda would unravel such arrangements, shifting the burden of paying for care back from the healthy to the sick. The worst-off would be those left to buy insurance on their own, directly from insurance carriers rather than through their employers or the government, since they will be at the mercy of underwriters who screen out bad medical risks. Beat cancer? Have your diabetes under control? Well, no matter. The commercial insurance industry still wants nothing to do with you—at least not at a price you can bear.

The right, in other words, has decided the problem with unaffordable health care is that it needs to be *more* unaffordable, at least for the people who need it most. And, into this vast, disturbing intellectual void on what is arguably the most important domestic issue of our time, the Democrats are proposing ... well, not a whole lot. In Washington, party leaders not named Ted Kennedy or Pete Stark have called only for modest, incremental changes, such as expanding Medicaid to cover more of the poor or opening up the insurance plan for federal employees to modestly wider enrollment. These ideas are all worthy enough. The number of people without health insurance today would be far higher if not for the quiet expansions of Medicaid and the creation of the State Children's Health Insurance Program during the '90s. But, taken together, these suggestions are still inadequate. It's the equivalent of giving aspirin to a heart attack victim: At best, it keeps a bad situation from getting worse. And only for short time.

It's time for the government to be much bolder, to try something even more far-reaching than what it attempted in the '60s: making health care a right, not a privilege. And doing so for everybody, even if that means having the government provide insurance directly. Such a proposal might confound the conventional notions about what works and what doesn't work in public policy. But providing health insurance happens to be a job the public sector has already proved it can do very well. The most popular health insurance plan in the United States is Medicare—which, except for the drug benefit and a few HMOs that contract for the business, is a government-run health care program. And Medicare isn't only popular. It's also efficient. Nearly all of the money that goes into the program, via taxes and the premiums seniors pay, goes back out to purchase actual medical services. Private insurance, by contrast, inevitably diverts a much greater share of its premium dollars to administration, marketing, and profits, which means less money for the beneficiaries. In theory, insurance companies should be competing to provide their subscribers with the best, most cost-effective medical care. In practice, they compete over who can enroll the healthiest patients, since that is the surest way to improve profit margins.

The other reason universal health care may seem an unconventional suggestion is because it is an "old" idea. The first proposals for universal health care surfaced at the end of the Progressive era, nearly a century ago. But "old" is not the same thing as "bad," and time has only made universal health care more relevant, not less. During the twentieth century, this country saved capitalism not only from its foes abroad but also from its deficiencies at home—chief among them its tendency to visit catastrophe on a few unlucky souls. While the foreign threat to capitalism has subsided, the domestic inadequacies are becoming severe once again, as pensions and job security vanish in the hypercompetitive global economy. The historic solution to this problem was to insulate individuals from excessive risk. And, while the private sector once did this for health care, it's no longer up to the task. Government isn't the best way to provide all Americans with health security. It's the *only* way. And it's time for liberalism to say so openly. ■

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Ending the McCain-Norquist feud.

Foe Pause

BY RYAN LIZZA

THERE'S NOTHING MORE fun in politics than good, old-fashioned hate. How would LBJ screw Bobby next? To what depths would Ken Starr sink in his crazed pursuit of Bill Clinton? Sadly, however, the days of pure, unabashed malice have faded. Hillary Clinton now clamors to sponsor legislation with the people who voted to impeach her husband. Dishonest civility has replaced honest hatred as the ruling ethos in the capital. People who despise each other pretend to get along just fine. Maybe it's a side-effect of one-party rule or the antiseptic, non-partisan nature of recent political investigations. Whatever the reason, there is a disturbingly large enemy gap in Washington.

Perhaps that's why connoisseurs of political enmity have savored the relationship between John McCain and his nemesis, the lobbyist Grover Norquist. A Hollywood-perfect hero/villain pairing, the two men have spewed bile at each other for almost a decade, ever since McCain began touting campaign finance reform, a crusade Norquist abhors. But what began as a policy spat has grown intensely personal. Norquist has regularly denounced McCain as a fraud, a flip-flopper, and, on one occasion, a nut job. The McCain camp, in turn, has condemned Norquist as corrupt, a shill for dictators, and (with just a dose of sarcasm) Jack Abramoff's gay lover. In a Washington devoid of grand political duels, the mutual hatred of McCain and Norquist has always been refreshing.

And now it's in danger of being snuffed out. McCain is as famous for forgiving his enemies—the North Vietnamese, George W. Bush—as he is for collecting them. And, lately, as he prepares to run for president, he's been on a tear, reconciling with many of the same characters who derailed his last run for the White House. Indeed, he's in such a forgiving mood that his surrogates are said to have approached Norquist to broker a truce. To be sure, some in the McCain camp deny it—"not true," insists his top operative, John Weaver. But, these days, you can't even get a McCainiac to bash Norquist. The official position on their feud is, What feud? "I don't know that the senator could pick him out of a lineup," Weaver says of Norquist.

BUT IT WASN'T long ago that the fight against Norquist defined McCain. More than any other activist, it was Norquist who shattered McCain's presidential ambitions. It all started in the fall of 1999, when McCain's insurgency against Bush took flight and Norquist personally organized the conservative counterattack. Decamping to New Hampshire and dragging along the leaders of the National Rifle Association, the Christian Coalition, and other right-wing luminaries, he assailed McCain's campaign finance proposal as "a trick and a trap" and an affront to the First Amendment. He hammered the point home with TV spots that memorably morphed McCain's face into Clinton's, the ultimate insult in a Republican primary.

The McCain campaign greeted Norquist as a threat to its success but also as an opportunity. McCain decided to embrace Norquist as his enemy and treat him as a symbol of everything he was fighting against. Aides told reporters that the true reason Norquist opposed a soft money ban was that it threatened his profits, not his principles. (The RNC once paid his organization, Americans for Tax Reform (ATR), $4.6 million to conduct a direct-mail and phone campaign.) They claimed that a recent Senate investigation had found evidence that Norquist skirted campaign finance rules, and Warren Rudman, McCain's chief New Hampshire surrogate, fumed that Norquist was "the root of what's wrong in American politics today." McCain even complained about Norquist in an exchange with Bush during a South Carolina presidential debate.

This death match carried over into the Bush years. As McCain pressed forward on campaign finance reform, Norquist lead the opposition, popping up on television to bash the senator. "He got his hand caught in the cookie jar taking money from that crook, Mr. Keating," Norquist spat in one appearance, referring to the S&L scandal that once ensnared McCain. But, in the end, McCain won the round, passing the bill and forcing Bush to sign it.

Even after that victory, McCain could hardly have anticipated the cosmic convergence of events that would lead to Norquist's head being delivered to him on a platter. Jack Abramoff, Norquist's longtime friend, had been directing his gambling clients to write checks to ATR. Norquist in turn set up White House meetings for tribal leaders, or, after taking a cut, passed the money on to other conservative organizations, which were queasy about pocketing cash directly from gambling interests. Reading the first details of the Abramoff scandal in the papers, McCain decided to investigate. As it turned out, he just happened to head the

DAVID COWLES

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committee, Indian Affairs, with jurisdiction over the juiciest political finance scandal since Watergate. And at the center of it all just happened to be Norquist.

McCain aides salivated. They whispered that the investigation would destroy Norquist. McCain subpoenaed volumes of e-mails and donor records from ATR. In the midst of the fight, the two sides elevated the hostility to new heights. Norquist referred to McCain as "the nut-job from Arizona." Asked about the comment, he told a reporter he actually meant to say the more subtle "gun-grabbing, tax-increasing Bolshevik." McCain's chief of staff, Mark Salter, returned fire, calling Norquist a bore and a blowhard and noting that "most Reagan revolutionaries came to Washington to do something more patriotic than rip off Indian tribes." In a 2005 *New Yorker* article, the two sides traded their most personal barbs yet, with Norquist hinting that McCain is crazy ("completely unstable," he charged) and with the McCainiacs hinting back that Norquist is gay ("Grover couldn't be any closer to Abramoff if they moved to Massachusetts and got married," said Salter).

The fight even spilled into the streets. In a radio interview, Norquist sputtered that McCain's entire investigation was actually an elaborate plot to help McCain's favored influence-peddlers score Abramoff's ex-clients. Scott Reed, a die-hard McCainiac lobbyist who had indeed picked up some of Abramoff's Indian business, went ballistic. Spying Norquist in front of his building, he told him to go fuck himself.

As McCain's investigation reached its denouement, rumors flew through Washington that his committee was sitting on a trove of damning evidence. He seemed to have a gun to Norquist's head. And then ... nothing. At the very moment when McCain could have pulled the trigger, he let Norquist walk away. Some mildly damaging e-mails were released by McCain's committee, but the most tantalizing leads were never pursued. McCain gave up his fight for information about Norquist's donors, and Norquist himself was never called to testify.

McCain's balk fits into a broader pattern of forgiveness. Most of the grudges left over from the Bush-McCain wars have thawed, the mutual contempt gradually giving way to mutual self-interest. In early 2004, their respective political advisers, Karl Rove and John Weaver—bitter rivals—made a bargain to move beyond their ugly history. Soon after, McCain made his peace with Bush and vigorously campaigned for his reelection. Other enemies have been scratched off McCain's list. Late last year, he hosted a meeting in his Senate office with Jerry Falwell, a man he once condemned as a "force of evil." This rapprochement has paid huge dividends for McCain's budding 2008 presidential run. Bush donors are sending the senator money. Former Bush officials like Dan Coats and Mark McKinnon have signed on as advisers. Local conservative pooh-bahs who backed Bush in early primary states, such as Chuck Yob in Michigan, are now saying sweet things about McCain.

Is Norquist next? It depends on whether McCain needs Norquist and the conservatives with whom he holds sway to win the Republican nomination or whether Norquist and his anti-McCain holdouts need McCain, a perhaps unbeatable candidate. When I ask Weaver the answer, he's coy: "Well, there's not a campaign now, so we're not at that stage of political chicken." One of McCain's senior Senate aides is similarly blasé. "Grover?" he snarks. "I don't know if Grover is important or not. I doubt they've met each other more than twice. ... He's just not an audience that anybody around here worries about." When I ask Norquist whether he might reconsider his opinion of the senator's conservative credentials, he claims he's open to the possibility. "If it's credible," he says. "But credible means doing something, not talking about it."

McCain seems to get the message. He voted last month to extend tax cuts he voted against in 2003. He's wooing Norquist's key allies, such as Mallory Factor, an influential New York conservative with whom McCain has met several times. McCain has even agreed to attend Factor's monthly Monday Meeting, a forum Norquist helped create. Factor is clear-eyed about how the political dynamics have changed since 2000, when conservatives like Norquist could afford to kneecap McCain. "McCain is probably the front-runner," he says. "As much as we think he needs us, given his strengths, we may need him even more." ■

The *Times*' boring libertarian.

Second Tierney

BY NOAM SCHEIBER

It's easy to see how *The New York Times* settled on John Tierney to replace longtime columnist William Safire last winter. Tierney is a veteran Timesman known for his wit and intellect. Many colleagues believed his libertarian streak would produce a quirky, iconoclastic take on the news. "He thinks outside the box, has a very distinct worldview, and I think he'll be a lot of fun," *Times* Editorial Page Editor Gail Collins told *The Washington Post*. Collins seemed to suggest that, in a time of intense partisanship, Tierney would be interesting because he doesn't fit comfortably into either party.

But, if Tierney's partisan sympathies have been fluid, his libertarian ideology has made him utterly predictable. Already, he has tallied seven columns lamenting the war on drugs, five bashing big government energy plans, and four more promoting vouchers. Other columns have savaged Amtrak and federalized airport security. No government initiative, however marginal, is safe from Tierney's withering gaze. (Here I submit to you all four Tierney columns

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about privatizing space exploration.) And so, while it can take years for the punishing, twice-weekly schedule to render most *Times* columnists unreadable, Tierney has managed the feat in a matter of months.

One of Tierney's most tedious stretches came just after Hurricane Katrina. Tierney's first Katrina column blamed government flood insurance for undermining people's incentives to protect themselves, never mind that the prospect of drowning in a toxic goulash should have been incentive enough. A second column bemoaned the feds' dubious "one-size-fits-all strategy" for dealing with hurricanes, as though FEMA had been forced to manufacture evacuation plans the way the Soviets manufactured Volgas. Subsequent columns rightly praised the performance of corporations like Wal-Mart during the crisis, but then proposed outsourcing FEMA's functions to said corporations. Finally, in his sixth Katrina column in seven opportunities, titled "LOSING THAT NEW DEAL RELIGION," Tierney got right down to it: He had lost faith in government.

Tierney's libertarianism is so rigid it can remind you of other philosophies purporting to explain the world with a single axiom. In many ways, Tierney's analytical style resembles that of a staff writer at the *Daily Worker*. The only difference is that, where Marxists emphasize one's relationship to the means of production, Tierney highlights the degree to which an action advances the cause of freedom. (Libertarians treat personal autonomy as sacrosanct and embrace markets as the best way to promote it.) In neither case would you need to read more than a few articles to know what the writer thinks about pretty much anything.

As a national affairs columnist, Tierney must write about politicians with some regularity. And, just as there is no more cartoonish figure in all of Marxist literature than the capitalist, there may be no more cartoonish figure in Tierney's imagination than the politician. The politicians of Tierney's columns are invariably corrupt, duplicitous, craven, and dim-witted—or, as he puts it, forever "hectoring us with bogus arguments," "doling out subsidies," "promis[ing] a cure for any problem in the news," and, of course, "trying to sneak 100,000 wind turbines into everyone's backyard but their own." Tellingly, Tierney rarely identifies politicians by name; he refers to them as a class.

The shrewdest observers of human nature in newsprint, such as Tierney's *Times* colleague David Brooks, understand that there are a million forces operating on an individual at any given moment. Some are personal—resentment, ambition, empathy, to name a few. Others are impersonal—culture, history, biology. All of them make monocausal explanations of human behavior hopeless. But this is never a problem for Tierney. For him, apparently the only thing you need to know about a person is what he does for a living.

OF COURSE, A lot of columnists have prominent worldviews. What distinguishes Tierney from his colleagues—including engaging libertarians like Dave Barry and *Slate*'s Jack Shafer—is that his worldview orders almost every thought, even the apolitical ones. Why did Lawrence Summers encounter trouble at Harvard? Because Harvard's faculty is an entrenched bureaucracy insulated from market forces. How should men think of marriage? As a job: "Devote as much energy to knowing your wife as you would to an important business client."

The most egregious example of this came in a January 14 column ostensibly eulogizing Tierney's friend and former colleague, David Rosenbaum, who was recently murdered. Tierney opened with a recent Garrison Keillor suggestion that urban Democrats provide better social services than anti-tax, suburban Republicans. As a way of rebutting Keillor, Tierney then invoked ... his deceased friend. "This week in Washington, a city run by Democrats with Keillor's views on taxes and public services, the municipal ambulance service has been making news for the help it didn't provide to David Rosenbaum," Tierney wrote. "David was still alive and conscious when a neighbor found him lying on the sidewalk and summoned help, but it took 23 minutes for the city ambulance to arrive." Finally, Tierney caught himself: "I do not mention these facts to make a case against government-run ambulance services. That would be a disservice to David. He abhorred argument by anecdote."

This particular column notwithstanding, Tierney is right: He doesn't abuse anecdotes the way most journalists do. His abuses are much worse. The standard reportorial technique is to lean on an anecdote to establish a trend. So, to take one example, a typical journalist might cite one or two NASA failures as evidence of a space program in decline, whether or not that's really the case. Tierney uses anecdotes to establish something slightly more ambitious: galactic truth. In Tierney's hands, these one or two failures prove that government is fundamentally ill-suited to the task of space exploration, as he suggests in one column. Or take Dartanian Sanders, whom Tierney met after the hurricane. "I've learned my lesson from Katrina," Sanders told Tierney in one column. "The lesson is to save money and be self-reliant. Counting on the government in an emergency is like sending your kids to a candy store where the guy is selling drugs." Well then, it's settled.

TO BE FAIR, it's easy to see how a permanent slot on an op-ed page could make someone shrill. Tierney certainly isn't the first columnist to come down with a case of Jerusalem syndrome. But, even by the standards of the crusading columnist out to change the world, Tierney has been a disappointment. Just consider his priorities. Sure, it's a shame we don't have reliable train service. But what about reliable health service? And, OK, I give, the drug war is costly, irrational, counterproductive. It deserves every bit of scorn Tierney heaps on it. But what about, you know, the *war* war? These aren't topics you're likely to read about in a John Tierney column. But, then, you've probably stopped reading him anyway. ■

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Raising money to save Darfur.

Student Aid

BY JASON ZENGERLE

LATE LAST SUMMER, Sam Bell set out to acquire an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). It was an unusual shopping expedition for a private citizen, much less a 22-year-old only a few months removed from his political science and philosophy studies at Swarthmore College. But, ever since graduation, and even while in school, Bell had been working to do what the U.S. government and the United Nations had so far failed to: stop the genocide in Darfur. He believed a UAV might help that goal, and so, one September afternoon, he put on his one-and-only suit and paid a visit to the Washington, D.C., offices of an aviation contractor called Evergreen International.

Two Evergreen executives received Bell as they would any potential client: enthusiastically. They regaled him with details of their UAVs—how they could be piloted by remote control from the company's Oregon headquarters and how their cameras had a 30-kilometer range and took remarkably precise pictures—and they proposed a strategy for using them. Evergreen would divide Darfur into four sectors, dedicating one UAV to each quadrant; the UAVs would then send photos of the whereabouts of the murderous *Janjaweed* militia to the African Union (AU) peacekeeping force.

Bell liked the idea, but not the $22 million annual price tag. He asked if the firm had any options for shoppers on a tighter budget. The executives offered an old, low-end, limited-range UAV for $5 million. That was still, as Bell puts it, "a bit out of our price range," but he thought it might be worth splurging—until he and fellow anti-genocide crusader Mark Hanis ran their potential purchase by an expert. "He said, one, a sandstorm could knock the UAV out; two, it could get shot down; and three, if either of those things happened, the Sudanese government could get a hold of it and take hold of its technology," Hanis explains. "So it turned out the UAV wasn't such a good idea."

BELL AND HANIS'S aborted foray into the world of discount drone shopping was done on behalf of the Genocide Intervention Network (GI-Net). Founded at Swarthmore in October 2004 by Hanis and another student, Andrew Sniderman, GI-Net sought to raise money from private citizens to support the underfunded, undermanned AU peacekeeping force. "We treat genocides like natural disasters, and we throw bags of rice at the problem," says Hanis, who, like Bell, graduated last spring. "We wanted to treat genocide as a security issue."

It was an out-of-the-box, arguably ludicrous idea—college students passing the hat to support a military force for a foreign intervention—but the idea got people's attention. After pitching the concept to a host of foreign policy luminaries—"I'd pull all-nighters e-mailing former secretaries of state," says Hanis, whose prior political outreach experience included running for Swarthmore's student council—a number of them, such as Roméo Dallaire and Samantha Power, gave GI-Net their endorsements, as did several members of Congress. The Center for American Progress (CAP), a liberal think tank in Washington, gave the group office space. And, most importantly, hundreds of people started giving GI-Net money. Students at Cornell University hosted a special showing of *Hotel Rwanda*, raising $5,000 for the group. A Mamaroneck, New York, high school held a battle of the bands. And a Salt Lake City piano teacher donated two weeks' worth of earnings. A year after Hanis and Sniderman first conceived of the idea during an International Club dinner in the college dining hall, GI-Net had collected $250,000 to support the Darfur peacekeepers (and an additional $250,000 to support GI-Net's operations). Now the group's members just needed to figure out how to spend the funds. But, as they soon discovered, raising money to stop a genocide is a lot easier than giving it away.

As GI-Net's founders originally envisioned it, their project would involve a straightforward transaction. They would raise the money, and then they would immediately bequeath it to the AU for items like walkie-talkies or tents. "We wanted the money to go to something tangible, something our donors could touch, not just some fund somewhere," says Bell.

To that end, Gayle Smith, a former Clinton administration National Security Council staffer who's now a senior fellow at CAP, met with AU officials in Addis Ababa on GI-Net's behalf early last year. But, while heartened by the American college students' efforts, the officials told her that they couldn't earmark GI-Net's money for a specific purpose and would be able to put it only into a general fund. "They don't have the time to handle the administrative hassles of keeping track of a $250,000 contribution," Bell explains.

So GI-Net's members began scrambling to find another way to come to the AU's aid. They became intrigued by the idea of giving their money to Rwanda—not exactly a historic model in combating genocide, but one of the most active contributors to the AU's peacekeeping mission. "We approached [Rwanda's U.S. ambassador] and said ... 'Could you take our contribution and deploy a contingent of female police officers to Darfur to protect women when they leave the refugee camps to forage for firewood?' " Bell says. The ambassador was interested, but he said that GI-Net would have to go through the AU—which reiterated its original reluctance.

Getting the runaround on the ground, GI-Net looked up in the air—and to the north. The Canadian government had provided a fleet of transport helicopters to the AU, and

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Sniderman, who is Canadian, thought his countrymen might be interested in expanding the contribution. "We hoped we could give our money to the Canadians and then they could increase the helicopter fleet by one," he says. He pitched the proposal to some interested mid-level foreign affairs officials, but higher-ups ultimately nixed the idea. "Their bosses said they had concerns about accepting citizen money for a government program," says Sniderman.

But private contractors had no such qualms about taking citizen money, and so GI-Net began to explore ways in which the private sector might help the group help the AU mission. In addition to Evergreen, the group spoke with Pacific Architects & Engineers, a U.S. firm that has a State Department contract to provide logistical support to the AU and was willing to use GI-Net's money to help fuel helicopters. There was just one problem. Fuel isn't "very visual," says Hanis. "A photo of two barrels of petroleum doesn't really motivate people to give more money."

The most surreal moment of GI-Net's search came last November when Sniderman—who is still in school (although no longer a member of the golf team, because he's now too busy)—e-mailed more than 100 private security firms. "I asked whether they'd be willing to deploy armed staff to protect refugee camps in Darfur," he says. "Within 36 hours, I got dozens of replies. Most were saying, 'We've never done anything like that, but we'd love to work with you.'" Operating from his dorm room—he made sure to change his voice mail greeting to "something more serious and somber ... something you'd want your business partners to hear"—Sniderman spoke with several firms about what sort of protection they could offer. "They were taking it very seriously. We were a potential client, and they were trying to figure out exactly what we wanted to do." One firm, whose identity Sniderman refuses to divulge, said that it would go to Darfur even if it did not receive permission from the Sudanese government.

GI-NET QUICKLY concluded that going with mercenaries was a bad idea. But, as their search dragged on, the group's members became increasingly frustrated that they were sitting on a pile of money when, seemingly every day, there was some new horror in Darfur. Finally, in January, GI-Net had a breakthrough. An African NGO was willing to take GI-Net's money and, in tandem with the AU, train a contingent of female escorts to protect Darfurian women when they leave their refugee camps to search for firewood. This week, Smith is in Addis Ababa putting the finishing touches on the deal.

As soon as it's a go, GI-Net will begin raising money to fund more security efforts in Darfur. But trying to do as private citizens what should, after all, be the job of governments has proved tougher than the group ever expected. "Some of us thought we'd do the fund-raising, hand it over, and they'd do the rest," Hanis says. He adds, somewhat wearily, "With giving money, there are a lot more details." ■

A Memo to Palestine's P.M.

PA Confidential

BY EFRAIM HALEVY

THE AUTHOR SERVED for four and a half years as the head of Mossad, Israel's intelligence service. As a thought experiment, he placed himself inside the mind of a Palestinian spymaster to provide a cold assessment of the challenges faced by the new Hamas-led government. The following is a memo to Ismail Haniyeh, the Palestinian prime minister.

Mr. Prime Minister:

Your rise to power has been meteoric and unprecedented. Less than 20 years after Sheik Ahmed Yassin founded Hamas—and after six years of bloody confrontation with the Israelis, during which many promising leaders perished in action—Hamas has scored a brilliant political triumph. You are now the leader of the Palestinian people, and I am obliged to provide you with an assessment of your prospects.

Let's begin with the international scene and some of the best news. The immediate steps taken by the Israelis and Americans to isolate Hamas have backfired. President Vladimir Putin of Russia invited your representatives to his capital—and that's before your government met any of the conditions imposed by the Quartet (the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations). The attempt to cast us as pariahs is disintegrating. We have already received expressions of support from key countries in the region, notably Iran. And even states like Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan, which have reservations about your victory, have gingerly accepted the election results. (Of course, we would wish for a more enthusiastic reception from the Saudis.) Somewhat more surprisingly, the Europeans and even the Americans have evinced great pragmatism in their dealings with us, allowing us the funds needed to sustain the lives of our citizenry. All in all, Hamas has topped 19 years of struggle with internal victory and a string of notable diplomatic successes within the space of a very few weeks.

But, in my capacity as intelligence chief, I am duty-bound to identify the threats to the Palestinian cause and to

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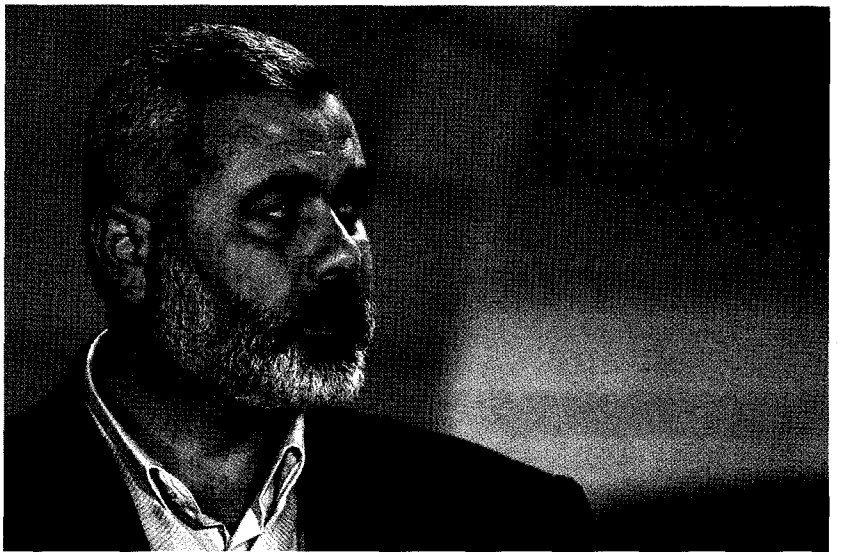
your leadership. Indeed, just as the prospects have never been so good, the threats have never been greater—they are, to be blunt, existential.

You must now define your basic aims and policies, both internally and externally. How will you govern? Who will you bring into the fold? And who will you leave out in the cold? Every option has a price tag, as you know. If you wish to forge an alliance with Fatah, you will have to give it a much larger piece of the pie. And, if you alienate the outgoing leadership, you must expect that it will not accept its political demise gracefully. This brings me to a far larger concern: the armed groups—Fatah's Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—in our midst. Since you are now the government, you must determine their fate. I don't believe that you can disarm them. That is, I assume that you will not wish to initiate a *fitna*, a bloody showdown with our Palestinian brethren. But you will still have to find a method of disciplining these groups. You will not wish to allow any further descent into anarchy, the very lawlessness that the Palestinian people sought to reject by voting you into office. And, needless to say, the Israelis would view such chaos as a pretext for moving into Palestine once again.



Serious threats to the Palestinian people will test their new prime minister, Ismail Haniyeh.

Then we arrive at the question of corruption. More than any other issue, the promise of clean government propelled you into office. I recommend that you punish at least a few representative figures from the previous Fatah regime, perhaps more. For obvious reasons, I do not wish to mention names. You know them all. And I'm sure that I don't need to emphasize this point, but the high expectations of the population will prove exceptionally difficult to manage. They don't just expect you to herald an era free of graft and malfeasance, but also to improve quality of life, maintain internal cohesion, and provide a modicum of domestic tranquility. Women, in particular, expect an enlightened era in which the government squares the spirit of Islam with recognition of some attributes of modernity. You will find that Palestinian women are more assertive than ever.

I've already described some good news on the international front. But our foreign relations will require their own delicacy. Your success requires the support of the current regimes in Jordan and Egypt, where the sister movements of the Muslim Brotherhood are gaining encouragement from your political triumph. If the leaders in Cairo and Amman feel that your policies undermine their interests, they will not hesitate to act against you or to leave you twisting in the wind. I must remind you that, at the height of the intifada, in March and April 2002, President Yasir Arafat appealed to Cairo and Amman to suspend diplomatic relations with Israel, which was then driving into every West Bank hamlet sowing death and destruction. Both capitals frostily turned Arafat down because their strategic relationship with Israel transcended their solidarity with Palestine. Even Damascus and Tehran (yes, Tehran), didn't lift a finger for us in that desperate hour. If Bashar Assad and Ayatollah Khameini had ordered the firing of Hezbollah rockets in Lebanon, they could have knocked the Israelis seriously off balance. But all we received from these supposedly radical capitals were hot words and stunning operational silence. I would advise we realistically estimate the support that we might obtain in the region—particularly if we maintain Hamas's guiding principles and policies.

Let me add another caveat about the surprisingly warm reception the new government has received abroad. That is, the Russians and Turks have hardly embraced you for the purest of motives. If I read their statements correctly, they believe that they can domesticate and defang Hamas with their kindness. They may also be driven by a more ephemeral goal: to help promote their own relationship with Tehran. At the same time that your colleague Khaled Mashal and his group visited Moscow, the Russians were engaged in a last-minute effort to strike a deal with the Iranians to curtail their nuclear program. Let me say, if the Russian negotiations with Iran fail, you will find Moscow backing the American position and not the Iranian one. This is a very fundamental Russian instinct that all players in the region have learned in the 15 years since the Soviet Union's fall. Please do not base any of your strategy solely on reports you might receive from brother Mashal.

The United States, Mr. Prime Minister, has encountered its share of recent difficulties in the Middle East. Its interests in the region are many and complex. They are great friends and allies of Israel, but, on occasion, they have been known to come down very hard on Israeli governments, in-

AHMAD KHATEIB/PHOTOGRAPHER SHOWCASE/NEWSCOM

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cluding that of Ariel Sharon. However, we must understand that the Americans have decided that the destiny of the entire Western world hinges on major changes in the Middle East, including regime change. They have committed their forces to battle in Afghanistan and in Iraq, and they will do this wherever the necessity arises. They will not quit halfway, because they believe the fate of their civilization depends on defeating so-called "international Islamic terrorism." They will therefore move to crush any obstacle in their path. The United States is well-aware that you are the first national faction of the Muslim Brotherhood in the entire region to reach power. You are a precedent, a first example, and, if you play it wrong—if you act in a way that seriously jeopardizes the allies of Washington—the United States will permit you to go down to a resounding armed and political defeat. Just as you are the first victor, you are the most vulnerable. And, at the end of the day, you will find the whole of Europe, Russia, Japan, India, Pakistan, the United Nations, and—believe me, Mr. Prime Minister—Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan confronting you.

Now, Mr. Prime Minister, I'm obliged to turn to a discussion of our enemy. As your intelligence officer, I must give you an honest assessment of the Israelis, however unpleasant some of it might be. In my initial description of events, I highlighted Hamas's achievements during the last 20-odd years. The Israelis have also not done too badly, despite their withdrawal from Gaza and locales in the northern West Bank. They have the best-trained, best-equipped, and most experienced military machine in the Middle East. They have a thriving economy, a prosperous business and industrial community, and a vibrant culture. The million-odd Arab citizens of Israel enjoy the highest standard of living of any Arab community in the region. They support us in some ways, but they balk at the mere mention of their joining the Palestinian Authority.

I think, as you surely agree, that our resistance to occupation propelled the Israelis to realize the limits of their power. But does Sharon's policy of unilateral disengagement prove that we should continue armed struggle? You must accept that a decision to continue resistance will force you to abandon your domestic agenda. The two are incompatible. Hamas's domestic agenda necessitates a period of calm. To improve the quality of life and develop our social, economic, and political institutions, we need calm and freedom of passage inside and between the West Bank and Gaza. We need the Israelis to remove their endless roadblocks on every artery and at every key junction. Therefore, we cannot even begin to implement our plans for Palestine without Israeli cooperation and understanding.

The Israeli position on the Palestinian issue has evolved over recent years in surprising directions, some inconceivable only a short while ago. As you know from your own time in Israeli jails, the Israelis have often scorned and belittled the Palestinians. Just look at the way they have treated our president, Mahmoud Abbas, in their public pronouncements. Nor did the Israelis take Arafat's threats to drive the Jews into the sea much more seriously. They do, however, take you and the Hamas movement seriously; they look upon you as a very real threat, and they have been parsing your every statement with a fine comb to understand your intentions.

Right now, the Israelis don't know how to react to your government. It is, of course, the Israeli campaign season. Every politician has the daily opportunity to make foolish statements. And they have done us a huge favor by demanding that Hamas recognize Israel. Imagine: Israel, with all its economic and military might, in the waiting room, anxiously awaiting word that you have bestowed recognition upon them! Well, you took good rhetorical advantage of this situation by roundly retorting that you would not recognize them. But, as I have argued, a change in the Israeli mindset is coming. After their election, I believe they will realize that they do not need us to recognize them; that we need *them* to recognize us. They will wake up after their election and realize that they can still control every aspect of life in the Palestinian territories and that they can destroy your domestic agenda without starving the Palestinian population. If they conclude that your government's ties to the Iranians are meaningful, they will not wait for this alliance to flourish and prosper. They will see your government as the extension of President Ahmadinejad, who has openly stated his aim to destroy Israel. Once they conclude that we have teamed up with such a monumental threat to Israel, they will conclude the worst about your intentions and will move with all their power to remove Hamas from the scene. And they will receive international and regional support for this mission. You can only avoid this, I must conclude, by beginning to come to terms with Israel.

There are three other points that I hope you will keep in mind. After the Oslo accords of 1993, Israel allowed the Palestinian leaders residing in the Diaspora to assume power, leaving the local leadership to play a secondary role. In the final analysis, this did not serve us well. We must avoid repeating this mistake. The likes of Mashal, who spent his exile in Damascus, should not be catapulted into authority. Secondly, pundits and politicians have made so many pronouncements about Hamas's future plans that everybody, even important players in your government, are confused about your intentions. Please use your authority to stop this unnecessary stream of words. Finally, as your intelligence chief, I must caution you to keep your distance from Al Qaeda and their operatives and policies. If you do not do this, the Palestinians will become the outlaws of the Middle East. This will spell certain disaster for us.

So, Mr. Prime Minister, you have the destiny of the nation in your hands, and you will have to make your choice between options. It is not for me to suggest to you which option to take. So much now depends on you, Mr. Prime Minister. The life and, God forbid, death, of the Palestinian people is now passing into your hands. ■

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Michael Crichton's scariest creation.

Jurassic President

BY MICHAEL CROWLEY

She took a sip of red wine, then set the glass down on the bedside table. Unceremoniously, she pulled her top over her head and dropped her skirt. She was wearing nothing beneath.

Still in her high heels, she walked toward him. . . . She was so passionate she seemed almost angry, and her beauty, the physical perfection of her dark body, intimidated him, but not for long.

—*State of Fear* by Michael Crichton

IT MAY BE hard to fathom that someone capable of writing the above passage is also capable of discovering the hidden truth about global warming that has eluded the world's leading scientists. But Michael Crichton, on the phone from Los Angeles, does not sound daunted. "If you just look at the science, I, at least, am underwhelmed," he says in a slightly jaded monotone that belies his breathless potboiler prose. "This may or may not be a problem, but it is far from the most serious problem. If you want to do something, [limiting emissions] is not what to do. We don't at this moment have good technology to do this, if, in fact, it's necessary to do it."

Then, before I can stop him, the superstar creator of *Jurassic Park* and more than a dozen other best-selling novels, as well as several box-office movie smashes and television's blockbuster "ER," is off and running through his favorite new area of expertise. Effortlessly, Crichton touches on the anti-windmill movement in England, references a 2001 article in the journal *Science* on global energy needs, notes interesting developments regarding the Kyoto treaty, and poses a question about the latest round of nation-by-nation emissions data. "How many people know that we did better on a percentage basis than Canada?" Crichton asks. He certainly does.

Global warming—or, specifically, the massive hoax by scientists and environmentalists that it allegedly represents and the resulting sexual conquests of nubile women that inevitably flow from the uncovering of this conspiracy—is the topic of *State of Fear*, Crichton's latest best-seller. So Crichton's ravings on the subject might be excusable as just a bad case of authorial self-promotion—were it not for the fact that he can now count among his millions of readers the president of the United States. As reported in *Rebel-in-Chief*, a new book on George W. Bush by *Weekly Standard* Editor Fred Barnes, soon after *State of Fear*'s December 2004 publication, Crichton was contacted by Karl Rove with word that Bush had read his novel and wanted to meet him. In January 2005, Crichton spent an hour with Bush. The session, Barnes writes, found the men "in near-total agreement."

Crichton, who hasn't previously spoken on the record about his meeting with Bush, bridles when I mention it. It's superficial, he says, beside the point, and soon he has slipped back into the more comfortable topic of U.N. documents on atmospheric temperature. What little he will offer about Bush isn't exactly a ringing endorsement. "In terms of meeting with Bush, I would say that, if the president of the United States asks to meet you, you go. Period," he says.

Crichton has obvious commercial reasons to downplay any hint that he might be a Bush partisan (Democrats buy books, too, after all). But the pulp novelist's influence on the president is even greater than Crichton's harshest critics imagine. During his career, Crichton has relentlessly propagandized on behalf of one big idea: that experts—scientists, intellectuals, reporters, and bureaucrats—are spectacularly corrupt and spectacularly wrong. (Not a terribly surprising response from a writer consistently patronized by critics.) Crichton's oeuvre has promoted, for an audience of millions, a damning critique of expertise. And the Bush administration has put this critique into action, trampling the opinions of government scientists, exorcising trained economists, muzzling the press, and stifling State Department wonks. Crichton, in other words, primed America for the Bush era.

By constructing this highly credentialed stock villain, Crichton created a new hero, too: the debunker, who uses his wits and untainted eyes to see through the hokum perpetuated by PhDs. This heroic figure happens to resemble none other than Crichton himself. By trashing the conventionally trained expert, Crichton has helped create an anti-intellectual ethos where the country's most powerful political leaders can embrace a science-fiction writer as a great authority. And that's exactly what has happened. Since *State of Fear*'s release, Crichton has been captivating audiences throughout Washington, from the American Enterprise Institute to Senate hearing rooms to the Oval Office itself. Finally, in Michael Crichton, the Republicans have found an expert they can love. And, for his part, what Crichton has found is something that, despite his mind-boggling commercial success, had always eluded him.

IN A 1995 interview with *Time* magazine, Crichton hinted at an agenda beyond dazzling people with roller-coaster plots and astounding Hollywood special effects. Somewhat ostentatiously citing Jean Cocteau's *The Difficulty of Being*, Crichton explained that the French

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writer "said what I've always believed about myself. He didn't care about being noticed for his style. He only wanted to be noticed for his ideas. And even better for the influence of the ideas."

Until then, however, Crichton, 63, was hardly known for his ideas. He was a plot machine. The son of a journalist, Crichton graduated summa cum laude from Harvard and then enrolled in Harvard Medical School. But, even while there, he couldn't resist cranking out sci-fi thrillers, and, after one of them—*The Andromeda Strain*, a 1969 novel about an alien virus brought to Earth by a fallen satellite—became a best-seller, he ditched his scrubs for a typewriter.

Through the 1970s up to the early '90s, Crichton offered few serious ideas. Instead, he delivered a steady supply of dystopian science-fiction thrillers—as well as Hollywood movies, which he began to direct after the film adaptation of *The Andromeda Strain*—in which science is fiendishly misapplied or veers horribly out of control: a computer-guided behavior-modification experiment goes awry (*The Terminal Man*); a cowboy-robot in a futuristic amusement park lethally malfunctions (*Westworld*); a hospital kills patients to harvest and sell their organs (*Coma*); dinosaurs are resurrected by cloning and freed by a venal scientist, resulting in carnage (*Jurassic Park*). Crichton's device was not an innovation: These were mere versions of the Frankenstein story, tales of often dislikeable scientists who misused or could not control their creations. But, in retrospect, they represent his germinating worldview: a distrust of scientists, of "the experts." It's a worldview central to the history of science fiction: Since Mary Shelley, the genre has critiqued modernization and the segments of society associated with it. In "The Imagination of Disaster," a 1965 essay about science-fiction movies, Susan Sontag noted, "The most ingrained contemporary mistrust of the intellect is visited ... upon the scientist-as-intellectual." But, for the Ivy League–credentialed Crichton, this represented a strange tension. He made his name as a credentialed insider in the world of science and technology—as someone who could be trusted to make arcane science accessible to the layman. Yet he couldn't stop deriding it.

There was likely another tension in Crichton's life at this time. He is, by any definition, a highly intelligent man—precocious (suspicious that a professor was grading him too harshly, he once turned in an essay written by George Orwell and considered his B-minus grade a vindication) and extremely ambitious. Though his books are pulp for the coach-class set, Crichton has always had one foot in a world far more high-minded than that of the $7.99 paperback. In interviews, he effortlessly drops literary and philosophical allusions from G.K. Chesterton to Jane Austen, disses Henry James ("he's trivial"), and once even wrote a book about Jasper Johns. And, tellingly, his first published essay—which, as it happened, appeared in THE NEW REPUBLIC in 1969—argued that Kurt Vonnegut should be taken more seriously than as a mere science-fiction writer. But, until the '90s, Crichton had failed to live up to Cocteau's dictum. That was about to change.

"I'M EXCITED ABOUT this hearing," said Senator James Inhofe. It was September 28, 2005, and the Oklahoma Republican had just convened a hearing of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. The day's purpose was to consider the scientific evidence for global warming, which the ultra-conservative Inhofe has described as "the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people." Inhofe isn't one to wear emotion on his sleeve, unless it's fury toward liberals, but, today, he was almost giddy about the celebrity guest he had landed. "I'm particularly interested in hearing the testimony of Dr. Michael Crichton," the gruff Oklahoman explained while Crichton sat a few feet away, his six-foot-nine-inch frame folded awkwardly under the witness table. "I think I've read most of his books. In fact, I've read them all. ... I enjoy the most *State of Fear*. I've tried to say that's required reading for this committee."

Although Committee Democrats like Hillary Clinton groused at the notion of a science-fiction author testifying about scientific facts, Crichton was granted the floor to discourse about climate change, the use of science in public policy, and, as he put it, "the now-familiar story of the hockey stick graph and the debate surrounding it. To summarize it briefly. ..." And on he went.

Finally, Crichton was seeing the influence of his ideas in all its glory. The road to this moment had begun more than a decade earlier, with the 1992 publication of his novel *Rising Sun*. That book's plot involved a murder of a beautiful young woman in a Japanese-owned Los Angeles skyscraper. In fact, it was an excuse for Crichton to issue a dire warning that Japan's "business is war" philosophy threatened to cripple and humiliate the United States. The book's afterword noted that its storyline "follows a well-established body of expert opinion." In *The New York Times Book Review*, Robert Nathan said the book "vaults over its humble origins as entertainment, grasps the American imagination and stirs up the volcanic subtexts of our daily life."

With *Rising Sun*, Crichton had made a crucial turn from constructing fantasy to chronicling reality. And, for the first time, he had an obvious influence on reality—political reality, at least. Pat Choate, a fellow Japan critic who knew Crichton at the time and who became Ross Perot's running mate in the 1996 presidential election, told me that Perot had "pick[ed] up" *Rising Sun*'s themes during his campaign. Choate added that he remembers Crichton as having been an enthusiastic Perot supporter.

That makes perfect sense. In our conversation, Crichton told me he viewed national politics with "enormous fatigue and a tremendous amount of cynicism. When I have political discussions with my friends, I piss them off, because my personal position is that there's no difference between the parties. It's the Red Sox and the Mets."

That's also how Ross Perot felt. Perot was pro-choice but culturally traditional, economically nationalistic, and an anti-Washington populist. He voiced a bitterness—typical in Crichton's work—that the eggheads in charge of the

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country can't do anything right. (Perot even had a famous paranoid streak, as do Crichton's many "they're-coming-to-get-us" tales.) Perot's campaign also presaged an important cultural-political shift in America: the rise of the angry white male.

All the better for the timing of Crichton's next polemic, *Disclosure*, a 1994 book (and, later, film) about a hapless white-collar fellow who gets seduced—and then falsely accused of sexual harassment—by his voluptuous man-eating female boss. Crichton noted in *Disclosure*'s afterword that he based the book on a true story and that he studiously interviewed the key participants in that case—almost as if aping the reported social commentary of, say, Tom Wolfe. In 1996 came *Airframe*, whose plot narrowly concerned the safety of airplanes but whose moral had to do with the treachery and idiocy of the press. Crichton feinted back to old form with 2002's *Prey*, in which a creepy scientist unleashes a swarm of homicidal nanotechnology particles. But even *Prey*'s long bibliography and preachy forward—"Sometime in the twenty-first century, our self-deluded recklessness will collide with our growing technological power"—made clear that it was intended as something more profound than just a made-for-Hollywood joyride. (And it was treated that way: *Prey* has been respectfully mentioned several times in congressional hearings about the future of nanotechnology.)

These books are more than stories: They are arguments. Crichton has never been known for nuanced character development. But, as with the novels of Ayn Rand or socialist realist fiction, the characters in his later books don't represent real people so much as ideas. Amid the death and mayhem, a moral struggle is underway. The books themselves follow what has become a familiar formula: We meet the main characters. Someone dies or suffers a terrible trauma. Then it's time for "the point"—a long, fact-heavy monologue that serves as Crichton's take on the issue at hand. Early in *Rising Sun*, for instance, comes this:

> As I approached Senator Morton, I heard him say, "Yes, I can tell you exactly why I'm disturbed by the extent of Japanese ownership of American industry. If we lose the ability to make our own products, we lose control over our destiny. It's that simple. ... The truth is, our nation is sliding badly."

In Rising Sun, the villains were treacherous foreigners. But, since then, Crichton has delighted in bashing a wide class of media and intellectual elites here at home. Thus, in Airframe, we get the current state of media ethics: "There was a time," one government official who deals with the press thinks to herself,

> when reporters wanted information, their questions directed to an underlying event. They wanted an accurate picture of the situation. ... But now reporters came to the story with the lead fixed in their minds; they saw their job as proving what they already knew. They didn't want information so much as evidence of villainy. ... They proceeded from an assumption of universal guilt, in an atmosphere of muted hostility and suspicion.

When Crichton isn't lecturing this way, he rolls out noxious characters to represent all that's wrong with the segment of society he's targeting. In *Disclosure*, for instance, we get a columnist named Constance Walsh, who plays the role of radical-feminist minstrel. She publishes a column titled "MR. PIGGY AT WORK," which affords Crichton the opportunity for a sarcastic rant. "[Rape] is exclusively a crime of males, who use [it] with appalling frequency to keep women in their place," she writes. "For their part, women simply do not oppress men. Women are powerless in the hands of men."

You can read these books in search of an ideology, but you won't find a distinct one. Clearly, Crichton is no liberal (although he argues that one of his earliest books, *A Case of Need*, did have a pro–abortion rights message). But a free-market conservative wouldn't write an essentially protectionist book like *Rising Sun*, either. What Crichton's worldview really amounts to is a kind of hectoring contrarianism that is increasingly targeted at America's know-it-alls, against the liberal elites, against the very type of expertise that had given him his professional cachet. And that worldview has reached its bitter, frothing apex with *State of Fear*.

IN PERFECT POPULIST fashion, Crichton says he was disgusted by his first Capitol Hill adventure. "It's all like a Stalinist show trial. The senators all get up and make their statements and leave. No one listens. Holy smokes. There was a lot of posturing and not a lot of real consideration of what people were arguing." What else did he expect, though? At one point in *State of Fear*, a sympathetic character observes that a Senate hearing is an "unquestionably manipulative" means of raising public awareness.

But one suspects that Crichton quite enjoys his newfound influence. He certainly couldn't have minded when, during his Senate appearance, Georgia Republican Johnny Isakson gushed, "At the risk of seeming to pander, I'd like to [thank] Dr. Crichton ... for the countless hours of entertainment he's given me on Delta Airlines back and forth to Washington over many, many years. And I have read *State of Fear*, and I found it very educational, very knowledgeable, and very entertaining."

Crichton's work has found its way into public policy debates in the past. But to judge from this sort of adulation, oped columns from the likes of George Will, a White House visit, speaking appearances before the American Enterprise Institute and something called the Washington Center for Complexity and Public Policy, and countless other examples, it seems safe to say that no Crichton novel has matched *State of Fear*'s effect. And it's no wonder: *State of Fear* is by far Crichton's most aggressive polemic. The book tells the story of environmentalists so determined to hype climate change that they use exotic technology to touch off natural cataclysms (crumbling a massive Arctic glacier, triggering a tsunami, and so on), with a willingness to see innocents die

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for their cause. According to Crichton, that cause—major limitations on greenhouse gas emissions—is madness. The news media and Hollywood celebrities don't understand that climate science is wildly imprecise, and, even if you take it seriously, the pro-warming case is overstated. The heroes of the book either understand or come to realize this, and we are meant to follow along with the help of graphs, copious footnotes referencing scientific studies, and long, pedantic exchanges between the characters. To wit, here we find one young global-warming believer stuck on a plane next to the heroic skeptic, John Kenner:

> The jet flew through the night. ... He sat in the back, staring out the window at the carpet of clouds glowing silver in the moonlight.
> Kenner sat opposite him. "It's a beautiful world, isn't it?" he said. "Water vapor is one of the distinctive features of our planet. Makes such beauty. It's surprising there is so little scientific understanding of how water vapor behaves."
> "Really?"
> "The atmosphere is a bigger mystery than anyone will admit. Simple example: No one can say for sure if global warming will result in more clouds, or fewer clouds."
> "Wait a minute," Evans said. "Global warming is going to raise the temperature, so more moisture will evaporate from the ocean, and more moisture means more clouds."
> "That's one idea. But higher temperature also means more water vapor in the air and therefore fewer clouds."
> "So which is it?"
> "Nobody knows."
> "Then how do they make computer models of climate?" Evans said.
> Kenner smiled. "As far as cloud cover is concerned, they guess."
> "They *guess*?"
> "Well, they don't call it a guess. They call it an estimate, or parameterization, or an approximation. But if you don't understand something, you can't approximate it. You're really just guessing."
> Evans felt the beginning of a headache.

So might the reader. By the time he wrote *State of Fear*, Crichton had been living in the Hollywood milieu for more than 20 years—and his frustration shows. Crichton's treatment of limousine liberals is his crankiest yet. He creates one character, a pompous bleeding heart clearly modeled after Martin Sheen, and then feeds him to cannibals. Another scene features a dilettante Hollywood environmentalist shocked that a climate-change skeptic would question her scientific authority. "But I am very dedicated to the environment, and I have been all my life," she protests indignantly. "I read everything. I read the 'Science' section of the *New York Times* every Tuesday *cover to cover*, of course *The New Yorker*, and the *New York Review*. I am extremely well informed." In case you didn't get the point, the same character is later pressed about where she'd be willing to build the vast expanses of solar panels her philosophy demands. Texas, she proposes. "Nobody I know cares about Texas."

Besides red-state-bashing Hollywood celebrities, Crichton takes aim at environmentalists, whom he portrays as overhyping the global-warming threat for fund-raising purposes. In one scene, Nick Drake, who resembles "a latter-day Ichabod Crane" and heads the "National Environmental Resource Fund" (NERF—get it?), berates subordinates for producing insufficiently alarmist promotional materials for a conference. "We need some punch here, some pizzazz," he complains. "This conference must point to a catastrophe."

This is the real argument of Crichton's *State of Fear*—that unseen forces are conspiring to alarm us so they can then manipulate us. The book is ultimately about something much bigger than global warming. Late in the novel, one character speechifies against "the politico-legal-media complex," which is "dedicated to promoting fear in the population—under the guise of promoting safety." The PLM is powerful because it "unites so many institutions of society. Politicians need fears to control the population. Lawyers need dangers to litigate, and make money. The media need scare stories to capture an audience. Together, these three estates are so compelling that they can go about their business even if the scare is totally groundless." Also fueling the PLM are universities: "factories of fear. They invent all the new terrors and all the new social anxieties ... to be used by politicians, lawyers, and reporters. Foods that are bad for you. Behaviors that are unacceptable. Can't smoke, can't swear, can't screw, can't *think*. ... The notion that these institutions are *liberal* is a cruel joke. They are fascist to the core, I'm telling you."

Global-warming alarmism, then, is just one more product of this nefarious cultural conspiracy. The "experts" have evolved from a bunch of foolhardy scientists to obnoxious feminists and reporters, then to a veritable vast, left-wing conspiracy that tyrannizes the nation. This is an odd argument, to say the least, coming from a man who has made tens of millions by scaring America about everything from hideous viruses to killer nanotechnology. Of course, it's not the first time that someone has played this trick. There's a certain resident of Pennsylvania Avenue who also decries the scare-mongering of experts—at the same time he raises homeland security alerts, conflates dictators and terrorists, and predicts the imminent collapse of Social Security.

And Crichton has undoubtedly profited from this similarity. The Bush years have been Michael Crichton's anni mirabiles. And now, like a mighty T-rex that has escaped from *Jurassic Park*, Crichton stomps across the public policy landscape, finally claiming the influence he has always sought. In this sense, he himself is like an experiment gone wrong—a creation of the publishing industry and Hollywood who has unexpectedly mutated into a menacing figure haunting think tanks, policy forums, hearing rooms, and even the Oval Office. And, ironically, this leaves Crichton in the very role he and the science-fiction genre have always derided: the hubristic man of opinions, the insider, the expert. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Slums, Snobs

AN OLD MYTH TELLS OF A bird that had to press its breast against a thorn in order to sing, which it then did beautifully. Political troubles have served as that thorn for some writers, and the end of those troubles has, along with its benefits, deprived them of their singing. George Konrád, the Hungarian author of major novels about the travails of life under totalitarianism, has dwindled as a novelist since democracy reached Hungary. Athol Fugard, the white South African author who wrote excellent plays about racial anguish in his country, has sent here no plays of note since racial oppression eased there. Presumably neither Konrád nor Fugard would want earlier conditions to return in order to help their writing; still, these facts exist.

TSOTSI
(Miramax)

THE FILM SNOB*S DICTIONARY
(Broadway Books)

A film director named Gavin Hood has found a way to keep Fugard present. He has adapted Fugard's only novel, **TSOTSI**, for the screen, and has directed the film, which just won the Oscar for Best Foreign Picture. The novel was written in 1961, before Fugard became internationally known, and he didn't even try to get it published. (See Russell Vandenbroucke's book on Fugard, *Truths the Hand Can Touch*.) In 1980, after Fugard became famous, the manuscript was discovered in a collection of his papers and, with some revision, was published. Now Hood has been moved to film it.

Fugard's plays are notable for their strong structure and driving truth. His best play, *Boesman and Lena*, which was dexterously filmed by John Berry in 2000, is, in my view, a great work that will last. *Tsotsi*, to judge by the film (I haven't read the book), is nowhere near that stratosphere. It is sentimental, but at least it is so purposefully sentimental that its very frankness of métier is helpful.

Its theme is of course racial. The title means "thug," in a South African native language, and it is the sobriquet of a nineteen-year-old black youth who lives in a slum outside Johannesburg. He is a member of a small band of criminals who steal and sometimes kill for a living. For Tsotsi himself, a flashback to his childhood explains his behavior; for the others, environment is enough. (Hood makes that environment a bustling organism.) One night Tsotsi hijacks a car after shooting the wealthy black owner in the leg. Tsotsi drives off and soon discovers that in the back of the car there is a baby. The moment that he discovers the baby, we discover the rest of the picture—in plot, anyway. Enforced paternity will alter Tsotsi's character.

Left at that, the film sounds flimsy, but two factors make it sound. First, all the characters are seen with Fugard's empathic ruthlessness: he is humane but truthful. Second, it is flawlessly acted. The cast is so good that a kind of counterpoint arises between the riskily lachrymose story and the firm verity of the acting. Two of the actors stand out. Tsotsi is played by Presley Chweneyagae (whose first name is as notable as his last): his emotional range and resources are continuously deepened as the film progresses. Terry Pheto, as a young mother who is forced to be the baby's wet nurse, is sullenly enchanting.

Their excellence, along with all the others, raises a familiar wonder about films from unusual sources. Quite evidently there is a substantial body of acting talent among South African blacks; some thirty-five years ago Fugard himself, in his New York productions, introduced us to gifted black South African actors. Word of theater activity there recurrently reaches us, and the quality of the acting in *Tsotsi*, its subtlety and skill, implies a theater culture in which these people can grow. Hood has clearly helped them and, in the knowing way in which he uses them, is almost boasting of the results. His cinematographer, Lance Gewer, has also helped greatly by immersing the action in a generally sepia light that supports the Fugard synthesis of naturalism and ache.

THE FILM SNOB*S DICTIONARY (114 pp., $11.95) is a better book than its title suggests. The authors, David Kamp and Lawrence Levi, who are active journalists in New York, have sharp eyes, fine-tuned ears, and more knowledge of what they discuss than they care to brag about. Their title burdens them with the obligation to be witty, and it is a burden of which they make light. In their opening acknowledgments paragraph, they include "everyone who has ever shouted '*Focus!*' in a revival house."

Kamp and Levi beguile us with sketches of film individuals and film topics that are current with those who are, almost offensively, in the know or those who want a quick way to seem in the know so that they too can be almost offensive. Of course some people joined that second group long before this book was published, so perhaps the book will have a therapeutic effect. Maybe those people will be too snobbish to remain snobs when Kamp and Levi make it seem so relatively easy.

This 114-page handbook ranges from the frothy to the serious, but it never loses its sardonic sheen. Instance: "**Tarkovsky, Andrei.** Russian director (1932–86) of stunning intellect and visual acuity, but afflicted with a glacial sense of pacing that makes watching his films not so much an entertainment choice as a lifestyle." Some of the entries conclude with chat lines. Instance: "**Deep focus.** Fetishized cinematographic technique that enables all the action in a shot, from the foreground to the deep background, to remain sharply defined." Then comes a line for use over espresso: "*Hou Hsiao-Hsien's graceful use of* deep focus *recalls the work of Yasujiro Ozu, non?*" Another: "**Diegesis.** Unnecessarily opaque film-studies

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term for the world inhabited by a film's characters: the music playing on a character's radio, for example, is diegetic sound, whereas the ominous music foreshadowing the character's graphic decapitation is non-diegetic sound. *The* diegesis *of* Last Year at Marienbad *is deliberately ambiguous, not unlike that of* Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey." (This cuddling of serious films and trash because of technical similarity is symptomatic of the snob.)

Interspersed along the way are some feature pages, such as "A Guide to Snob Nomenclature": "'Jack,' never 'John' Ford (for the iconic Western director.") A few entries deal with critics, including this one. That paragraph made me wriggle and laugh. Gad, was my reaction snobbish? ■

Martha C. Nussbaum
The Prohibition Era

COVERING:
THE HIDDEN ASSAULT ON OUR CIVIL RIGHTS
By Kenji Yoshino
(Random House, 268 pp., $24.95)

I.

IN 1998, A Missouri court granted custody to a lesbian mother, after finding that "the children were unaware of Mother's sexual preference, and Mother never engaged in any sexual or affectionate behavior in the presence of the children." Many courts have gone the other way, after determining that same-sex parents engaged not in overt sexual conduct that would be inappropriate for any parent to display before any child, but in displays of affection, such as hugging or holding hands, which clearly revealed the parent's sexual orientation. Courts in these cases are not demanding that same-sex parents stop being gay, or even that they pretend not to be gay. Instead, they are making a demand that Kenji Yoshino (following Erving Goffman) calls a demand for "covering": a demand not to express their identity in public and visible ways.

The repression of a minority, Yoshino argues, does not end when it is permitted to exist in society, and is no longer forced to "convert" to some other way of being and acting. Nor does it end when members of the group are not expected to "pass," concealing their minority identity from all but chosen intimates. Even when minorities who reveal their group membership openly are tolerated, they are often required to assimilate in ways that "cover" that identity. Thus, it was all right for the lesbian mother to be known as a lesbian, but not all right for her to hold hands with her partner. It is often all right for African Americans to be prominent in the workplace, but they have to dress for success and play nice, conforming their behavior to a stereotype invented by the dominant culture.

An interesting example that came too late for inclusion in Yoshino's account of "covering" has been the media's treatment of the Olympic medal–winning speed skater Shani Davis. White society was all set to pat itself on the back when an African American finally medaled in the lily-white sport, and Davis would have been warmly welcomed into its bosom had he been cheerful, docile, and grateful. Stories of how Davis overcame his "gang-infested" neighborhood (he comes from my own neighborhood, Chicago's Hyde Park, a multiracial university community that can be criticized as boring but not as gang-infested) were trotted out to prepare the way for a warm reception. Instead of gratitude and proper "white" behavior, however, Davis was spiky, brusque, and clearly annoyed at the press's quite ridiculous treatment of his origins. He talked to Chicago newspapers, which treated him with respect and got his story right, but he turned a cold shoulder to the others. ("Are you angry, Shani?" a network reporter asked, as if that would be the unforgivable sin, when the white community was being so very nice.) A similar treatment often befalls African Americans who wear cornrows,

Martha C. Nussbaum is a professor at the University of Chicago Law School and the author of FRONTIERS OF JUSTICE: DISABILITY, NATIONALITY, SPECIES MEMBERSHIP *(Belknap Press).*

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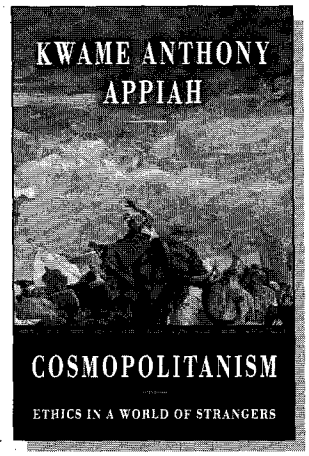

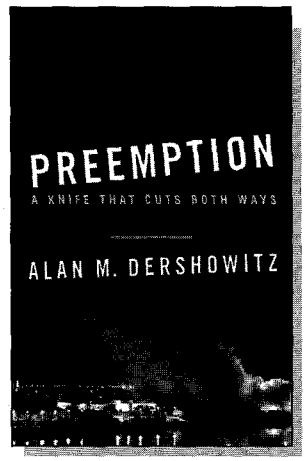

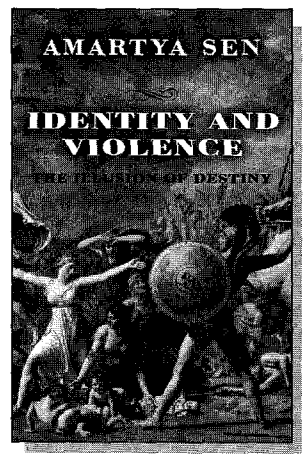

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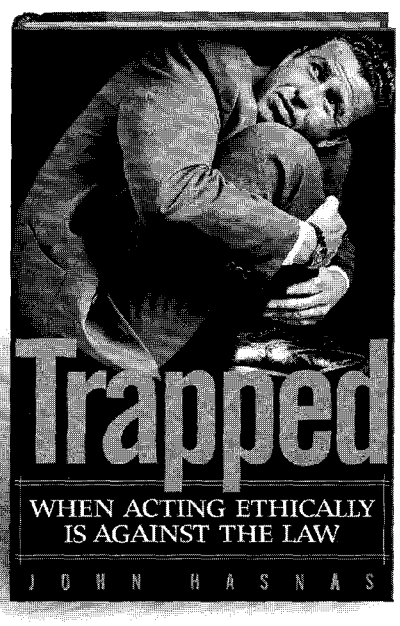

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or "talk black," or in other ways refuse to make the majority comfortable.

Similar stories can be told about other minorities. There was once a time when Jews were forced to convert to Christianity if they wanted to escape persecution. Overlapping with this time were times when many Jews persisted in their religion but kept it secret, "passing" as Christian, while revealing their Jewish identity to intimates. By far the most significant form of discrimination suffered by Jews in Europe and North America in the modern era, however, is the form that Yoshino calls "covering": they may be full and equal (sort of) members of Protestant society if they talk and dress like WASPs, and do not flaunt their religion before others; in short, if they are not "too Jewish." In the mid–twentieth century, upwardly mobile Jewish parents gave their children WASP names, urged them to avoid their too-Jewish peers, and made sure they went to WASP schools where they would get the "right" social connections. I know older Jews who flinch, even today, before "out" Jews of their own generation, because the expressions and mannerisms of those Jews are exactly what their parents drilled them not to display.

Women, too, encounter a demand for "covering," but in a more complicated, mixed-up form. At times, women are urged to adopt stereotypical male behavior. A female law student is urged to be aggressive and talkative, to wear a black suit, to mask her emotions, not to have children or to say nothing about them if she does. But at other times (and in other careers), women are penalized if their dress and manner are not "feminine" enough. How on earth any sane person could ever decode these social rules is beyond me. Our confusion is clearly revealed by Yoshino's lists of women's "masculine" and "feminine" characteristics, since many professional women possess most of the items on both lists: they avoid pastels and floral designs, and they are aggressive, ambitious, assertive, athletic, competitive, individualistic, and self-reliant; but they also wear earrings and makeup, are sympathetic and yielding, and perform "nurture" functions at work, "like counseling and mentoring." So who would be surprised that women get criticized and downgraded from both directions: sometimes for being "too masculine," sometimes for being not "masculine" enough?

The story of any minority's progress, argues Yoshino, can be charted by examining these three stages: first, the demand for conversion; second, the demand for "passing"; third, and last, the demand for "covering." Not all three categories apply to all groups. Women were never asked to "convert," for obvious reasons, or even to "pass," and African Americans had no realistic option of "conversion." Most minorities in America today, according to Yoshino, no longer face demands for conversion or passing—but all, to some extent, face the demand for covering, for assimilation to majority norms. And this demand, while less oppressive than the other two, is profoundly unfair, burdening minorities in ways that majorities are not burdened.

Moreover, the demand is fraught with psychological danger. How can a person really have equality when she has to push some of her most deeply rooted commitments under the rug, treating them as something shameful and socially inappropriate? Surely the lives of gays in America have improved markedly now that they are typically not subjected to enforced conversion procedures, and may even be "out" with impunity; but being "out," as Yoshino rightly shows, is a spectrum, and the law professor whose colleagues tolerate his known gayness but who urge him not to engage in gay politics, or not to teach sexual-orientation law, or not to "flaunt" his orientation through public displays of affection, encounters a demand that is constricting. So, Yoshino concludes, we should not pat ourselves on the back because we tolerate people who are different, when we are imposing demands that deform and humiliate. Instead we must think about how we can produce a society where people are free to be themselves.

THIS IS A HELPFUL AND IMPORTANT idea, and Yoshino argues well that we need to make it central to our social debates. But what is original about his book is not so much its central argument, which was adumbrated by Goffman, as the way in which it puts flesh on Goffman's concept through an arresting personal narrative. Yoshino once wanted to be a poet, he tells us, and it was his struggle with his gay identity that turned him to law. But he is still a wonderful writer, and what makes his rather routine "coming-out story" interesting is its literary beauty, which may have a kind of *Brokeback Mountain* impact on the parts of "straight" society that

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encounter the book. Here is how Yoshino describes his first realization that he was in love with a man:

> One glittering afternoon, we walked along the Charles River. It was a Sunday—the riverside drive was hedged with sawhorses, closed to cars. The cyclists sheared the air. Dazzled by the needles of light stitching the water, I turned to watch him watch them. I noticed his eyelashes were reflected in his eyes, like awnings in windowpanes. As I tried to make sense of that reflection, I found I could not look away. His irises were brown, clouding into orange, with brighter flecks around his pupils....
>
> It hardly mattered that I knew he was straight. I experienced my desire for him, which was a pent-up desire for many men, as having an absolute absolved necessity. Just as the brain seems larger than the skull that contains it, so did my desire seem grossly to exceed the contours of my body. I thought if I could only make him experience the strength of what I felt, he could not demur.

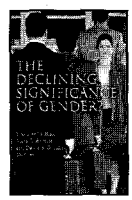
Yoshino's daring choice to alternate between narrative and analysis is vindicated by the skill with which he does both. What emerges from the long account of his depression, his search for love, his coming out to his parents (whose first thought is that now they can never go back to Japan), his turn to law and political activism, is a picture of a strong and decent man who has managed to protect his capacity for love and joy despite the social pressures that he so shrewdly exposes. Although he is an activist and feels solidarity with other gays and lesbians, he does not romanticize defiance or trash stable affection; indeed, one of the biggest costs he ascribes to the "covering" demand is a cost in the ability to express love in a way that is simply first-personal and not tinged with political shock.

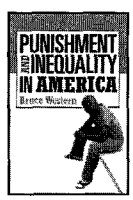
The first part of the book is devoted primarily to this autobiographical narrative, with brief glimpses of the analysis to come. Yoshino then presents a detailed analysis of gay covering and somewhat shorter analyses of race-related and gender-related covering. He briefly alludes to similar issues in the areas of religion and disability. Finally, after some consideration of potential legal remedies for the covering problem, he concludes that law will not really be of much avail in this area, that the real struggle must be fought informally, in families and in civil society. As a first step, we can at least promote a lot of public conversation about the demands we make on people.

II.

In its contention that covering is a central human problem in American society today, Yoshino's book is convincing, and also moving. But there is more that needs to be said. I wish the book had somewhat more of a comparative and historical dimension, because it is clear that, whatever problems afflict the United States today, this country is much more accepting of public differences of many sorts than societies in most other times and places. One has only to think of the Victorian Britain assailed in Mill's *On Liberty* to see that a good deal of progress has been made.

It would also have been very instructive to do a detailed comparison of the assimilation demands made of Jews in present-day Europe and in the United





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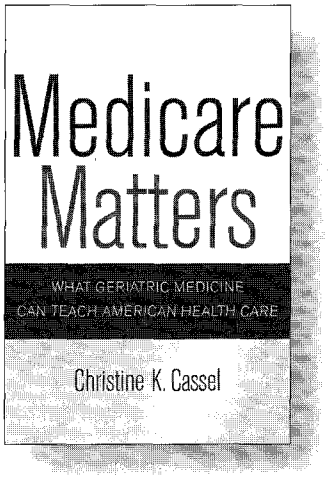

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States. Yoshino is just wrong, I think, when he says that there is increasing pressure on Jews today to conform to the WASP paradigm. Indeed, you can chart the progress Jews have made against "covering" in many ways, not least by noticing the flowering of Hebrew, yarmulkes, and even prayer shawls in Reform Judaism, that once most middle-class and assimilationist of denominations. On a recent visit to Hebrew Union College, the cradle of Reform, I studied the photographs of graduating classes of rabbis from the 1860s until the present day. The biggest change—apart from the inclusion of women—was the gradual de-covering of rabbinical dress. At one time all wore black suits, all were clean-shaven and bare-headed. Today many have beards, all wear yarmulkes, and almost all (including the women, of course) wear a *tallis*. We really have moved beyond the melting pot.

So how did America come to permit the gradual self-expression of Jews as Jews, and why is that expressive freedom still largely denied them in Europe? Most Americans recoil at France's insensitivity to the marks of religious identity (yarmulkes are banned in school along with the more notorious Muslim head scarf), and at Italy's insistence (until now) that hanging a crucifix in front of every public school classroom is just fine as an expression of "our culture." My peeve of the week is that Finland just scheduled a major public discussion of the future of the Finnish democracy (including the entire parliament) on Yom Kippur—and despite the presence of Jews in the legislature. I (as an invited speaker) was the first to break this news to them. Either these Jews are very ignorant, or the demand for "covering" silenced them.

THIS IS A GENERAL ISSUE, AND it goes way back to the founding. From the mid–seventeenth century on, one can find public sensitivity at least to religious difference: to Quakers who refused to take their hats off in court; to Jews who refused to testify on Saturday; even to refusals of military service, as George Washington reassures the pacifist Quakers that their "conscientious scruples" will be treated with "the utmost delicacy and tenderness." Europe was not like this until a long time later—if, indeed, it has ever become like this, since we see rather little "delicacy and tenderness" in European debates about Islam these days.

If, then, covering is the regime of the hour in America (or in some parts of America) with respect to same-sex relationships, it might be helpful to ask whether this is because we are in general a land where covering reigns, or because we are a land that has particular difficulty with sexual matters generally, and sexual orientation in particular. It is the latter, I think; and so the public conversation demanded by Yoshino needs to be not a conversation about the prejudice and conformism, the excessive and even coercive universalism, that allegedly frustrates the multicultural realities of American life, as a result of which we all agree to respect difference and authenticity; but rather a more specific and deeply uncomfortable conversation about sex, gender, and family.

Since Yoshino's tone is romantic, and poetically discreet, his book never really talks about sex. But if sex between men is what the panic is all about, as I think on the whole it is, then romantic talk will not reach the problem. In this way, Yoshino's narrative is quite unlike *Brokeback Mountain*, because it lets readers have an easy time of it: they can, if they want, imagine Yoshino as a disembodied spirit, and they are not forced to think about sex acts that many Americans find revolting. A significant part of the problem of gay life in America goes unaddressed, since anti-gay feeling is not just about difference, it is centrally about sex.

ANOTHER PROBLEM WITH Yoshino's analysis is its concept of authenticity. Yoshino smartly refuses the easy idea that authenticity can be measured by the extent to which a minority group buys into a specifically minority stereotype. Though at times, early in the book, he appears to suggest that a woman who fixes her own car, or an Asian who listens to NPR (his example), or a gay man who does not care about political activism, is by definition inauthentic, he ultimately rejects this notion—and a good thing, too, since it is just as tyrannical as the regime of covering that it opposes. Just as an adolescent needs to learn that individuality does not mean doing the opposite of what one's parents recommend—such oppositional behavior is no less determined by parental norms than is perfect conformity—so, too, minorities are cruel and deforming if they insist that only stereotypical behavior (of a sort that is quite likely to be a

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back-formation of some type from dominant norms) defines one as a "real" black and not an "oreo," a "real" gay and not a "normal."

While Yoshino refuses (somewhat inconstantly) the bankrupt route of defining authenticity as rebellion, he does not provide a positive analysis. Philosophical accounts of autonomy (which require reflection, critical scrutiny of traditions, and so on) have a lot to contribute to the further analysis that never emerges. Mill, Kant, and modern writers such as Gerald Dworkin and Marilyn Friedman would all have been quite helpful to Yoshino in crafting a normative account of autonomy that could separate mindless conformity from a genuinely thoughtful choice of a mainstream way of life. Yoshino appears not to be interested in philosophy. Instead, he turns to the psychoanalyst Winnicott and his conceptions of the "True Self" and the "False Self."

Now, I love Winnicott as much as Yoshino does (and have said why in these pages), but the True Self is a concept that Winnicott defined in several ways, some of them verging on an excessive romanticism. At times Winnicott suggests, helpfully and attractively, that the True Self is something like the autonomous self of the philosophers: it is the organized set of whatever commitments and values stand the test of reflection, so that we are willing to identify our life and our selfhood with them. That is the sort of concept Yoshino needs in order to ask which aspects of a minority identity are truly central, part of our autonomy, and which parts are more peripheral. This aspect of Winnicott fits well with Yoshino's call for more reflection and debate—but often Winnicott (who was so deeply bruised by the puritanical conformism of his Methodist family that he was sexually impotent until he was past forty) speaks in more romantic terms of a hidden inner core that is incommunicable in language, suggesting that any contact at all with other people and the world deforms the True Self. (Emily Brontë was one of his favorites, and he particularly identified with Cathy in *Wuthering Heights*.) So it really is not helpful for Yoshino to refer vaguely to Winnicott: he needs to tell us which Winnicott he means, and to give some analytical precision to what Winnicott left vague and amorphous.

We see clearly enough what Yoshino is against, but until we see more clearly what he is for, we have no confidence that we have really understood him. He writes as if there is only one thing that a person really is, and all other social presentations of self are somehow "false" (though, with Winnicott, he does admit that the False Self can be useful). But people are usually a tumultuous mixture of elements, and it may be very unclear what any person "really" is; it is very unlikely that there is one unitary thing that each of us "is." A "covered" self might be the real and sincere way one presents oneself as a worker (say, not alluding to one's own personal problems at work), or even as a friend or lover (say, trying to suppress one's selfishness, or anger, or anxiety). Sometimes covering is just discretion, and protective of others. Discretion, like self-expression, is often a social good. There may be wild or silly or childlike elements of the self that emerge in intimate contexts, and these would be utterly out of place elsewhere. They would lose their delight if the workplace suddenly opened itself to admit them. This does not make these other contexts repressive, or one's behavior in them somehow squeezed and defective.

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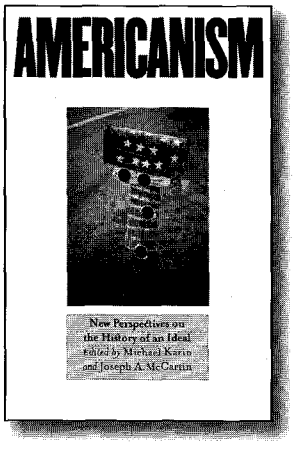

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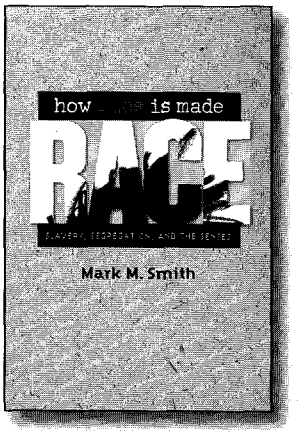

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Often, too, external demands help people develop richer and more variegated selves. Educators who believed that the best school was one that imposed no external demands, letting children express themselves as they pleased at all times, soon learned that the children grew up not free but unfree, lacking both crucial knowledge and trained expressive capacities. After all, what art worth anything is created spontaneously by children? As a once-aspiring poet, Yoshino should know that external discipline is usually a necessary condition of all expression worthy of the name. And what is true of art is also true of virtue: one does not learn to be sensitive to the needs of others without taxing discipline, which imposes covering demands that often last the entirety of a life. All this needs sorting out. Yoshino clearly does not accept the extreme romantic view according to which all social norms are bad; but he says much too little about what he is for. There is a large hole at the heart of the book, to be filled in by whatever the reader can come up with that works better than slavish adherence to conformity.

MORE TROUBLING, SINCE THIS is a book by a law professor, is that Yoshino seems to have relatively little interest in the law. He does not even state legal issues accurately. His treatment of the legal issues involved in the major gay-rights cases is cursory but not truly bad; the same cannot be said of his casual treatment of the legal issues surrounding disability and, above all, religion. Yoshino says that in these two areas America has adopted a "principle of accommodation," and he goes on to give some examples of how that principle works in practice (accommodations for persons with disabilities in the workplace, the Supreme Court's decision that the Amish need not send their children to the last two years of required public school). Analytically, however, he does not even get started, since he never makes a distinction that is absolutely basic: between accommodations resulting from legislation and accommodations resulting from judicial interpretation of constitutional requirements.

Atlantis—A Lost Sonnet

How on earth did it happen, I used to wonder
that a whole city—arches, pillars, colonnades,
not to mention vehicles and animals—had all
one fine day gone under?

I mean, I said to myself, the world was small then.
Surely a great city must have been missed?

I miss our old city—
white pepper, white pudding, you and I meeting under
fanlights and low skies to go home in it—Maybe
what really happened is

this: the old fable-makers searched hard for a word
to convey that what is gone is gone forever and
never found it. And so, in the best traditions of
where we come from

they gave their sorrow a name and drowned it.

EAVAN BOLAND

The Americans With Disabilities Act is legislation. The Supreme Court has a role in interpreting it, but it did not create it. Very different are some of the accommodations granted to religious minorities, such as exemptions from the draft, or the educational dispensation given to Amish children: these are judicially mandated accommodations that give people the right to be exempt from laws passed by a majority and applicable to all citizens. This distinction is crucial because virtually nobody thinks that legislative accommodations are a bad thing (though there may be some limits to how some of them can be made consistent with the establishment clause). A long judicial tradition, by contrast, thinks that judicially created accommodations are a very bad thing, an example of courts riding roughshod over democracy.

Yoshino not only fails to state this conflict, he rides roughshod over it. Quoting from Justice Sandra Day O'Connor to exemplify the "accommodation principle," he neglects to inform the reader that she is describing the regime of accommodation that once existed but that the majority opinion in *Employment Division* v. *Smith* (1990) has just uprooted, to her great displeasure. Nor can we capture the ongoing judicial debate well in Yoshino's terms, as a debate between people who like covering and people who do not like it. Justice Antonin Scalia is happy to go along with many legislative accommodations (even when they concern religious drug use, which was the issue in *Smith*); he just thinks that judges should not usually be in the business of imposing them.

And even under the less accommodation-friendly regime that Scalia initiated in *Smith*, there is room for minorities to complain. Santería worshippers in Hialeah got the Court to toss out a regulation forbidding animal sacrifice that clearly targeted them in particular, and this with Scalia's approval, since he found clear evidence of discriminatory intent. More daringly, Justice Samuel Alito, while an appellate judge, ruled that the Newark police might not deny Muslim police officers the right to wear beards for religious reasons, given that they had allowed a secular exemption for people with a rare skin condition. This case went further than Scalia's "neutrality" theory suggested, since there was no finding of discriminatory intent. It was, and is, an admirable decision, within the confines of the present legal regime.

But Yoshino does not even give us the difference between the pre-*Smith* and the post-*Smith* regimes, or state the current judicial understanding at both state and federal levels. (Many states have adopted the pre-*Smith* accommodation-friendly principle as a feature of state law, and the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act has protected important areas of accommodation at the federal level, including, recently, the right of minority-religion prisoners to opportunities for worship that many states had denied them.) It was a mistake to treat this fascinating area of law so casually, because it gives us rich insights as to how a regime that is concerned not just with conversion and passing, but also with expressive conduct, can be implemented through law.

IF YOSHINO HAD GONE INTO THE religion cases, he would have had to face an issue that he nowhere faces: what reasons for exemptions from laws of general applicability should a legal regime recognize? Or, to use Yoshino's language, what types of covering should it forbid? Ours has focused on the specialness of religion—after all, that

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is what the free exercise clause protects, not the "free exercise of culture," or the "free exercise of identity," or anything else. "Religion" was clearly understood at the time of the founding as a broad concept: early drafts often use the term "rights of conscience," and my guess is that the final wording came in only because of the decision to focus on "exercise" as well as belief, and because the phrase "free exercise of conscience" was an anomaly, just not a phrase that anyone had used in these debates.

Whatever the Framers meant to protect (and we should remember that around 80 percent of Americans in the early years of the republic were not members of any organized church, though most were Christians of some kind), the tradition of interpretation has understood the notion of "religion" relatively capaciously—at the very least to include non-theistic religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. During the Vietnam War, the Court went still further, giving exemptions from the draft to two young men whose beliefs were *sui generis*. One, Seeger, called his view "religious" and provided a metaphysical account to go with it. The other, Welsh, crossed out "religious" on his conscientious objector form, and plainly had what we might call a comprehensive ethical doctrine entailing non-killing. The Court stretched "religion" to the limit here, obviously trying to show respect for conscience even when conscience did not take an organized or traditional shape.

Yet the Court has never dropped the general idea that religious reasons are special. A worker who refused to work on Saturday because the day care centers are closed, citing reasons of family obligation, or one who pointed out that her ethnic minority held its regular group meetings only on Saturday, would get the brush-off. A Jew or a Seventh-Day Adventist would not, because our tradition believes that reasons of conscience are somehow special. What exactly reasons of conscience are, and why they are special, remains deeply obscure, and some legal thinkers find the special place for religion simply unconscionable. (They tend to defend Scalia's less protective *Smith* standard, for quite different reasons from the institutional reasons Scalia used.)

I would like to know what Yoshino thinks about all this. When an employee wants to wear cornrows at work, is this an issue of conscience? (Of course race is constitutionally special for different reasons, so what we need here is an example of ethno-cultural dress that is not racially coded.) What if I have large and conspicuous tattoos, which express my personal conception of an authentic life, and my employer tells me that I have to cover them in the workplace? Is there any reason why the law should listen to my complaint, and, if so, what account of the protected areas of expression could coherently be given?

YOSHINO TELLS US—AND THIS is *all* that he tells us about the law of accommodation—that certain reasons for making "covering" demands should be disallowed: prejudice, bias, animus. But most of the covering demands in today's world are motivated not by those things, but by a love of uniformity, or administrative simplicity, or even a love of country (as in the compulsory flag-salute cases). And even these otherwise admirable reasons have an uphill battle when issues of conscience are at stake, or at least they did before *Smith*, and do now, in a narrower set of cases. What O'Connor valued about the pre-*Smith* regime (rightly, in my view) was that it ensured that the state had to show a "compelling interest" if it was going to override a reason of conscience and impose a "substantial burden" on the free exercise of religion of any person. Just any old hand-waving about administrative efficiency would not do.

Should this asymmetry between reasons of conscience and other reasons exist? Can it be defended? If it cannot be defended philosophically, should we still wish to retain it in the light of history, which shows us how conscience has been trampled by the state again and again? And if we do not retain the idea of the specialness of conscience, don't we just have to get rid of the idea of accommodation as a workable legal idea? There is a lot about law in this topic, then, and Yoshino seems oddly uninterested in these decisive dimensions of his complaint. In this sense, the book's melodramatic subtitle is deceptive. Although Yoshino does speak of a new attitude to "civil rights" that thinks of universal human rights norms as being gradually applied in informal social interactions, the term "civil rights" usually refers to enforceable legal rights, which is what Yoshino, in the end, does not think most rights against covering demands are.

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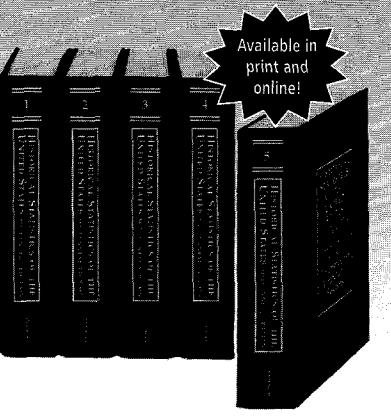

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Perhaps Yoshino's lack of interest in real civil rights is not so surprising, given his central focus on gay issues. People usually are not disgusted by the religions of others. (There are exceptions: the Mormons come to mind, and perhaps the Jehovah's Witnesses.) So those inequalities are amenable to legal redress, and even in colonial America people could understand that liberty of conscience is something precious to all, as much to those one considers damned as to those one considers saved. When people are disgusted by the sex acts of others, by contrast, law is a pretty blunt instrument, as Yoshino in the end concludes. People who are disgusted really do not believe that liberty of sexual self-expression is valuable for all. Law can tell people that they cannot turn their disgust reactions into legal penalties, and that, at last, is something. Sodomy laws are no more, and in many areas of life gays and lesbians have also won protections against workplace discrimination. In some places they are winning at least the civil rights associated with marriage, if not marriage itself. To counter the persistent demand for covering, however, it seems likely that time and social change will be necessary, because law has done almost as much as it can do on its own.

Yoshino calls for public debate and reasoned conversation. Those are good things to call for. But the issue demands more. It demands also an effort of culture: works of art, high art and popular art, that touch the public imagination and inspire it to feel empathy with relationships that are now viewed with loathing. To that humane public poetry, Yoshino's lyrical and thought-provoking book makes a significant contribution. ■

Ruth Franklin

A Thousand Darknesses

NIGHT
By Elie Wiesel
Translated by Marion Wiesel
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 120 pp., $9)

NIGHT IS THE MOST DEVASTATING account of the Holocaust that I have ever read. It is devastating first because of its simplicity. The basic outline is this: after the Germans invade Hungary in 1944, the teenaged Eliezer and his family, religious Jews who live comfortably in their community, are deported to Auschwitz. He and his father, separated from the rest of their family, are assigned to hard labor. As the last days of the war endlessly tick by, they survive transfers, work assignments, selections, illnesses, and all the other daily threats of life in the camp, while watching their friends and neighbors fall dead all around them. In January 1945, Auschwitz is liquidated, and they march through the snow for days before being transferred to Buchenwald. There Eliezer watches his father slowly die.

There are no epiphanies in *Night*, like Primo Levi's epiphany in *Survival in Auschwitz*, when he recalls the story of Ulysses from Dante's *Inferno* and remembers that he, too, is a thinking, feeling human being. And there is no irony, like Imre Kertész's irony in *Fatelessness*, when the narrator, mistaken for a corpse and carted away, protests that he would "like to live a bit longer in this beautiful concentration camp." There is no extraneous detail, no analysis, no speculation. There is only a story: Eliezer's account of what happened, spoken in his voice.

The story itself is by now familiar. We know all about Dr. Mengele and people being sent to the left and to the right, about the Zyklon B and the crematoria, about the bizarre systems and hierarchies that allowed some prisoners to discover methods of survival and condemned others to an even quicker death. And the story's familiarity etherizes our minds into complacency: it becomes possible for us to think that because we know about all these things, we actually *know* them. Auschwitz is no longer just a place—it is a shorthand for the Shoah, a common metaphor for uncommon evil, the almost platitudinous reference for the very embodiment of hell on earth.

Amazingly, such complacency had already set in just a decade after the war, when François Mauriac wrote in his foreword to the French edition of *Night* that "this personal record, coming after so many others and describing an outrage about which we might imagine we already know all that it is possible to know, is nevertheless different, distinct, unique." He suggested that *Night*'s uniqueness resides in the circumstances of its coming to exist—that is, its author's experiences during the war years—which "would in themselves be sufficient to inspire a book to which no other could be compared."

By this standard, however, every Holocaust memoir is "unique," since each survivor tells his or her own terrible story. The second reason *Night* is incomparably devastating has less to do with the facts of Wiesel's story than with the way he tells them. The book is exquisitely constructed. I do not mean that it is beautifully written: its language and style are decidedly plain. But every sentence feels weighted and deliberate, every episode carefully chosen and delineated. It is also shockingly brief; it can be read in an hour, and carried in a pocket. One has the sense of merciless experience mercilessly distilled to its essence, because to take a story as fundamentally brutal as this one and clutter it with embellishments would be grotesque. By refusing to add the rationality of explanation or the cynicism of hindsight, *Night* takes us back to its terrible story with something resembling innocence, the innocence of a young boy who, like the rest of the Jews of Europe, had no idea what was coming. To read it is to lose one's own innocence about the Holocaust all over again.

NIGHT, TOGETHER WITH *THE Diary of Anne Frank*, told the story of the Holocaust to the world. The book has been translated into thirty languages and has sold more than six million copies in the United States alone. When the American edition appeared, A. Alvarez wrote in *Commentary* that it was "almost unbearably painful, and certainly beyond criticism." In the years since then, *Night*'s potency has been diffused by its very canonicity. It has been relegated to high school reading lists and overshadowed by the subsequent fame of its author. But now a new chapter has opened in *Night*'s strange career. A lucid new

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translation of the book by Marion Wiesel, the author's wife, has been selected by Oprah Winfrey for her influential book club; and last month, nearly a half-century after its publication, *Night* made its first appearance at the top of the *New York Times* best-seller list.

Night's resuscitation comes at a difficult time for the genre of memoir, which has lately been undergoing a crisis. First James Frey was embraced and then flagellated by Winfrey for fabricating large parts of *A Million Little Pieces*; and soon several other opportunists who had fraudulently claimed an autobiographical basis for their fiction were similarly debunked. Considering the circumstances, Winfrey's endorsement of *Night* was a canny move: what could better restore her credibility—and the credibility of memoir itself—than a book that was "beyond criticism"? And in fact *Night* was seized as a lodestar of authenticity by the many commentators who lambasted Winfrey's judgment in the Frey affair. Frank Rich even suggested, quite preposterously, that Winfrey's initial support of the dissimulator Frey might be used by Holocaust deniers to discount Wiesel's experiences.

Unfortunately, *Night* is an imperfect ambassador for the infallibility of the memoir, for the simple fact that it has itself often been treated as a novel—by journalists, by scholars, and even by its publishers. Matters are further confused by Wiesel's admission in the preface to the new edition that, thanks to his wife's editing, he had been able "to correct and revise a number of important details." He does not elaborate on what these details are, but the statement was quickly investigated by the news media, which reported that among them are such errors as the narrator's age upon his arrival at Auschwitz. (In the first English translation he is said to be "almost fifteen," while in the new edition he is fifteen.) Understandably embarrassed by any suggestion of similarity between his book and Frey's, Wiesel asserted to a reporter that since *Night* is a memoir, his "experiences in the book—A to Z—must be true.... I object angrily if someone mentions it as a novel."

But if *Night* is not a novel, even an autobiographical novel, it is not exactly a memoir, either—if one defines memoir, following Michiko Kakutani (one of the many to go mildly nuts about Frey's hoax) as a form that prizes "authenticity above all else." In our present circumstances, the book has a useful lesson to teach about the complexities of memoir and memory. The story of how *Night* came into existence reveals just how many factors come into play in the creation of a memoir—the obligation to remember and to testify, certainly, but also the artistic and even moral obligation to construct a credible persona and to craft a beautiful work. Fact, we know, can be stranger than fiction; but truth in prose, it turns out, is not always the same thing as truth in life.

NIGHT WAS FIRST PUBLISHED in Buenos Aires in 1956, as the 117th volume in a series of Yiddish memoirs of prewar and wartime Europe, under the title "... *un di velt hot geshvign*," or ... *And the World Was Silent*. Ruth R. Wisse, in *The Modern Jewish Canon*, notes that in contrast to the other works in the series, which were traditional testimonials that aimed to memorialize as many of the murdered as possible, Wiesel's book was a "highly selective and isolating literary narrative" clearly influenced by its young author's reading of the French existentialists. When the book was translated (or as Wisse puts it, "transposed") into French, this distinction sharpened, beginning with the title, which shifts the book's emphasis from the silence of the world at the Jews' fate to the abstract "night," which can mean at once the darkness of the camps and the moral and spiritual darkness of the world during (and after) World War II. Wiesel was reimagining his book not for his shrinking Yiddish readership, but for the global audience that it would eventually attain.

Wiesel's Yiddish manuscript was more than eight hundred pages long. *La Nuit*, as it was published by Éditions du Minuit in 1958, was 121 pages. Wiesel says that he made a number of the cuts on his own, with further editing from his French publisher, which he then approved. All material not directly related to the story was pruned away. "Substance alone mattered," Wiesel writes in the preface to the new edition (which, like all the translations of *Night*, is based on the French version, not the Yiddish original). "I was more afraid of having said too much than too little." But his revisions had other implications as well.

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As Naomi Seidman wrote in an essay called "Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage," which analyzes some of Wiesel's revisions to the Yiddish text, "There are two survivors ... a Yiddish and a French": the first wrote a testimonial that was largely intended for the historical record, while the second had grander ambitions.

The book originally began with a passage in which the author, in lines steeped in his biblical education, lamented the Jews' self-deception during the war years:

> In the beginning there was faith—which is childish; trust—which is vain; and illusion—which is dangerous.
>
> We believed in God, trusted in man, and lived with the illusion that every one of us has been entrusted with a sacred spark from the Shekhinah's flame; that every one of us carries in his eyes and in his soul a reflection of God's image.
>
> *That* was the source if not the cause of all our ordeals.

And it ended with what Wiesel calls a "gloomy meditation" on the global response to the Holocaust:

> Now, scarcely ten years after Buchenwald, I realize that the world forgets quickly. Today, Germany is a sovereign state. The German army has been resuscitated. Ilse Koch, the notorious sadistic monster of Buchenwald, was allowed to have children and live happily ever after ... War criminals stroll through the streets of Hamburg and Munich. The past seems to have been erased, relegated to oblivion.
>
> Today, there are anti-Semites in Germany, France, and even the United States who tell the world that the "story" of six million assassinated Jews is nothing but a hoax, and many people, not knowing any better, may well believe them, if not today then tomorrow or the day after....

As Wisse points out, there is a political purpose to the disappearance of these lines from the text: Wiesel may have been reluctant to expose the "collective self-blame" of the Jews or his own fury at the rest of the world to a primarily Gentile audience. But, more importantly, there is an aesthetic imperative at work as well. These passages have their own didactic power: Wiesel's bitterness as he speaks of the Jews' belief as an "illusion," and his expression of his own impotence in the face of Holocaust denial, is tragic. But their moralizing tone is at odds with the simplicity of the main narrative, and it detracts from the power of the story. There is a terrifying finality to the last scene of the edited version, in which the narrator, after the liberation of Buchenwald and a brief stay in the hospital, looks at himself in the mirror for the first time since his imprisonment: "From the depths of the mirror, a corpse was contemplating me. The look in his eyes as he gazed at me has never left me." This otherworldly image is worth a thousand words about the lack of justice for the Nazis or the continuing anti-Semitism of Holocaust deniers.

LIKE ANY MEMOIR, *NIGHT* MUST balance between absolute fidelity to the events and the making of literature. Its poetic austerity comes at a cost to the literal truth. This cost, it must be said, does not detract in the least way from *Night*'s validity as a Holocaust testimonial. (Since Seidman published her essay about Wiesel ten years ago, it has been outrageously appropriated by Holocaust deniers who exploit her analysis of the differences between Wiesel's Yiddish and French texts for their own purposes.) But it is worth recognizing that such a cost exists, if only to remind ourselves that no memoir can be at once an unerring representation of reality and a genuine artistic achievement.

Consider, for example, the book's first chapter, which begins in 1942, when Eliezer (as the narrator of *Night* calls himself) is twelve years old. He describes himself as "deeply observant" and immersed in religious study, though he has been unable to find anyone willing to tutor him in kabbalah, an esoteric subject of study generally restricted to older men. One day at the synagogue he falls into conversation with Moishe the Beadle, a poor man who reveals a surprising fount of knowledge. Eliezer recounts one of their dialogues:

> Man comes closer to God through the questions he asks Him, he liked to say. Therein lies true dialogue. Man asks and God replies. But we don't understand His replies. We cannot understand them. Because they dwell in the depths of our souls and remain there until we die. The real answers, Eliezer, you will find only within yourself.
>
> "And why do you pray, Moishe?" I asked him.
>
> "I pray to the God within me for the strength to ask Him the real questions." ...
>
> And in the course of those evenings I became convinced that Moishe the Beadle would help me enter eternity, into that time when question and answer would become ONE.

These talks end when Moishe, along with the rest of the town's foreign Jews, is deported.

He returns with a horrifying tale. The Jews, he said, traveled first by train and then by truck to a forest in Galicia, where they were forced to dig trenches. After they had finished, they were shot one by one. Moishe escaped, miraculously, after being wounded in the leg and left for dead. But no matter how many times he repeats his story, no one believes him; even as late as the spring of 1944, as German troops are invading Budapest, the Jews of Sighet do not think the army will reach their town. They do not even really believe that Hitler intends to exterminate the Jews. The narrator does not try to explain their naïveté, just as later he does not try to explain the Nazis' brutality. He relies only on factual statements: "In less than three days, German army vehicles made their appearance on our streets."

"Night fell.... Night had fallen.... Night." This is the book's only narrative flourish: an almost incantatory repetition, in steady but irregular beats at the beginning of a sentence or a passage bearing some new agony. The Jews of Sighet are first restricted to two small ghettos; soon they learn they are all to be deported. Eliezer's family is in the last group to go, packed eighty to a train car. In their car is a woman named Mrs. Schächter, who has lost her mind and cries out continually: "Fire! I see a fire! I see flames, huge flames!" The other passengers tie her down and gag her. Finally they arrive at a train station bearing the sign "Auschwitz." Here Mrs. Schächter screams of fire again, and now the rest of the passengers see it too.

Is it not too much to ask that the impoverished beadle be both a master of the kabbalah and a Cassandra-like figure whose warnings go unheeded? Or,

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similarly, that the journey to Auschwitz be punctuated by the cries of another unacknowledged clairvoyant? In fact, if one compares the events in *Night* to Wiesel's account of his wartime experience in his memoirs, the first part of which were published in 1995 under the title *All Rivers Run to the Sea*, the evidence of artistic labor can easily be found. The young Wiesel, who was brought up in the hasidic tradition, did in fact dabble in Jewish mysticism, but his master was a man named Kalman, not Moishe the beadle, who is another person entirely. The character in *Night* is a composite, and so the dialogue that Wiesel reports, and which I quoted above, must be imagined. Mrs. Schächter and her terrifying vision appears in both books, but in *All Rivers Run to the Sea* she merits just a single mention, while her role in *Night* is considerably upgraded. Then there is all the information that appears in the memoirs but did not find its way into *Night*, including the warnings that the Jews of Sighet did have and the repeated deliberations they made about what to do.

DOES ANYBODY, OTHER THAN the literary scholar, care about such variations? Do they matter in any way? They are not problems of fact, after all; they are instances of artistic license. And that is precisely why they are important. Wiesel's decision to make the beadle a secret kabbalist sacrifices literal fact for literary effect: it simplifies the story, helping it to achieve its parable-like quality, and it adds another dimension to Moishe's tragedy. It indicates that Wiesel recognizes the memoirist's dual obligation—to the truth, certainly, but also to tell his story in the most interesting, most memorable, and most meaningful way possible. Like the translator who occasionally veers from the grammar of an individual phrase for the sake of the quality of the whole work, the memoirist too must have the liberty to shape his raw materials into a work of art.

Wiesel's shaping occurs mainly in the service of the narrator's crisis of faith, which is the basso continuo beneath the entire book. It is embodied in *Night*'s central episode: the public hanging of a young boy with an angelic face, who served as one of the Kapos' assistants, together with two other men. Here is Ruth R. Wisse's translation of the scene as it appears in the original Yiddish manuscript:

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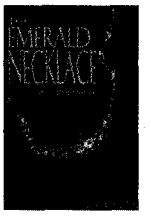

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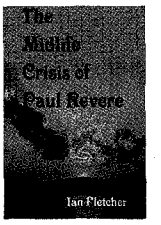

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Both adults were already dead. The noose had choked them at once. Instantly they expired. Their extended tongues were red as fire.

The slight Jewish child with the lost dreamy eyes was still alive. His body weighed too little. Was too light. The noose didn't "catch."

The slow death of the little *meshoresl* [assistant] took thirty-five minutes. And we saw him wobbling, swaying, on the rope, with his bluish-red tongue extended, with a prayer on his grey-white lips, a prayer to God, to the Angel of Death, to take pity on him, to take his soul, liberating it from its death-throes, from the torments of the grave. When we saw him like that, the hanged child, many of us didn't want to, couldn't keep from crying.

—Where is God?—the same man asked again, behind me. Something in me wanted to answer him:

—Where is God? Here he is, hanging on the gallows ... [ellipsis in original]

That evening the soup had no taste.

We hid it away for the next day.

And here it is in *Night*, in Marion Wiesel's translation:

The two men were no longer alive. Their tongues were hanging out, swollen and bluish. But the third rope was still moving: the child, too light, was still breathing ... [ellipsis in original]

And so he remained for more than half an hour, lingering between life and death, writhing before our eyes. And we were forced to look at him at close range. He was still alive when I passed him. His tongue was still red, his eyes not yet extinguished.

Behind me, I heard the same man asking:

"For God's sake, where is God?"

And from within me, I heard a voice answer:

"Where He is? This is where—hanging here from this gallows. ..."

That night the soup tasted of corpses.

The "improved" version is shorter, most obviously, but it also speaks from a subtly altered perspective. The voice in the first passage is communal: "When we saw him ... many of us ... couldn't keep from crying." The second emphasizes the singular experience of the narrator: "He was still alive when I passed him." The Holocaust happened to a whole community, obviously, but the community cannot effectively speak as a whole. It is only with the voice of an individual messenger that we can empathize. The new version also boldly alters the final line. Wisse comments that the passage's new ending is "more credible," since "by all accounts, no one at Auschwitz could have left his soup for the next day." But her reading overlooks the fact that Wiesel has taken a simple description ("the soup had no taste") and substituted a literary trope ("the soup tasted of corpses"). Even at Auschwitz, corpses were not actually used to prepare the soup. Paradoxically, a metaphor becomes more believable than an unembellished description.

IT IS WORTH NOTING, THOUGH, THAT the substance of the passage—which is not altered at all in the translation into French and English—is a highly stylized scene constructed to maximize every bit of its shock value. As many critics have remarked, the execution of the angelic young boy together with two anonymous men has Christ-like overtones, which are heightened by the inherent similarity between the gallows and the crucifix. But even discounting this framework, the narrator bluntly informs us of the death of God, in phrasing that is strikingly similar in the two versions. The passage functions as a turning point in *Night*, after which the narrator apparently ceases to believe. Up to now, he has occasionally invoked God's presence, if only as bitter commentary. "How I sympathized with Job!" he comments early on. "I did not deny God's existence, but I doubted his absolute justice." But soon after the hanging the inmates celebrate Rosh Hashanah, and Eliezer feels unable to take part in the services. "Blessed be God's name?" he asks.

Why, but why would I bless Him? Every fiber in me rebelled. Because He caused thousands of children to burn in His mass graves? Because He kept six crematoria working day and night, including Sabbath and the Holy Days? Because in His great might, He had created Auschwitz, Birkenau, Buna, and so many other factories of death? How could I say to Him: Blessed be Thou, Almighty, Master of the Universe, who chose us among all nations to be tortured day and night, to watch as our fathers, our mothers, our brothers end up in the furnaces? ... But now, I no longer pleaded for anything. I was no longer able to lament. On the contrary, I felt very strong. I was the accuser, God the accused. My eyes had opened and I was alone, terribly alone in a world without God, without man.

In his memoir, Wiesel writes with some annoyance that *Night* has often been read as a narrative about the loss of faith. On the contrary, he says, he remained a believer after the war (and writes with joy of resuming his Talmudic studies at a camp for displaced children in France), and he continues to practice Judaism to this day. Yet what he has written in *Night* is more than an indictment of God's absence, along the lines of Paul Celan's famous poem "Tenebrae," in which the Jews in the camps address God in a tone that is half menacing, half sympathetic: "Pray, Lord,/Pray to us,/We are near"; or of Zvi Kolitz's legendary story "Yosl Rakover Talks to God," which imagines an extended soliloquy directed by a Jew in the Warsaw Ghetto to a God who has "hidden his face from the world." Indeed, after this point God nearly disappears from *Night*, returning only at the very end for one last plea. Watching an elderly rabbi search for the son who has abandoned him in the desperate snowy march from Auschwitz, Eliezer prays to "that God in whom I no longer believed: My God, Lord of the Universe, give me strength never to do what Rabbi Eliahou's son has done." His prayer, if it is heard, is not answered.

THERE IS SOMETHING A LITTLE barbaric about performing this sort of dissection on such a book. To be sure, questions have been raised in the past about Wiesel's report even by those who are not Holocaust deniers, specifically his origi-

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nal suggestion that couples "copulated" in the cattle cars on the way to Auschwitz (this was always a gross mistranslation of the original Yiddish, and the new version has toned it down to "caressed each other") and his claim that he saw living babies tossed into flaming pits on his first night in the camp, which has been challenged in *The New York Times Book Review* and elsewhere. In the foreword to the new edition, he insists that the latter claim is true. (Given everything we know about the sadism of the SS, what is so obviously suspicious about it?) But the very act of trying to put *Night* under the fact-checker's lens smacks of indecency. One cannot seriously worry about whether babies were burned alive or dead at Auschwitz without losing something of one's own humanity. Is it not enough to know that they were burned at all?

Wiesel, I suspect, would agree. Another passage cut from the Yiddish version describes the death of his father, which is the great tragedy of *Night*. "Why not include those [lines] in the new translation?" Wiesel asks in the foreword. "Too personal, too private, perhaps; they need to remain between the lines. And yet . . ." And he goes on to give the passage in its entirety, but separate from the main text. The material that was cut adds nothing to the factual content of the scene: it describes his feelings, his fear of the SS guard who was beating his father and thus his reluctance to come to his father's aid, and his shame at his own fear. The final version leaves all that to the reader's imagination:

> In front of the block, the SS were giving orders. An officer passed between the bunks. My father was pleading:
>
> "My son, water . . . I'm burning up . . . My insides . . ."
>
> "Silence over there!" barked the officer.
>
> "Eliezer," continued my father, "water . . ."
>
> The officer came closer and shouted to him to be silent. But my father did not hear. He continued to call me. The officer wielded his club and dealt him a violent blow to the head.
>
> I didn't move. I was afraid, my body was afraid of another blow, this time to *my* head.
>
> My father groaned once more, I heard:
>
> "Eliezer . . ."
>
> I could see that he was still breathing—in gasps. I didn't move.
>
> [all ellipses in original]

Is one version truer than the other? No one could say—not even, I suspect, Wiesel himself, which is precisely why he includes them both. "I mean to recount not the story of my life, but my stories," he writes in *All Rivers Run to the Sea*. "Some see their work as a commentary on their life; for others it is the other way around. I count myself among the latter. Consider this account, then, as a kind of commentary." The purpose of a commentary is to explicate—but also to invite discussion, argument, more commentary. As the young kabbalist in the death camps knows, the union of question and answer will take place only in eternity. ■

David Quint
The Farmer as Hero

THE GEORGICS OF VIRGIL
Translated by David Ferry
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 202 pp., $30)

VIRGIL'S GEORGICS
Translated by Janet Lembke
(Yale University Press, 114 pp., $25)

IN VIRGIL'S *AENEID*, THE EPIC story of the founding of Rome, the Trojan foreigner Aeneas carries into battle a shield elaborately wrought by the divine craftsman Vulcan, a stand-in for the poet. On it the god has prophetically sculpted scenes of future Roman history. They culminate in the victory of Octavian Caesar, the future Augustus and first Roman emperor, over Antony and Cleopatra at the battle of Actium in 31 B.C.E., and the triple triumph that Octavian marked in Rome two years later, celebrating his and the city's empire across the known world. Meanwhile, Aeneas's opponent, the native Italian Turnus, carries a shield that depicts . . . a cow. True enough, the cow is Io, a former mistress whom Jupiter transformed into a heifer because of his wife Juno's jealousy, and the shield testifies to Turnus's devotion to the goddess. But it is still a cow.

In a generally humorless poem, this is Virgil's silent joke at the expense of the not-overly-bright Turnus and his rustic Italian followers, who are no match for their sophisticated foes from a once-great eastern city. Yet the joke has its serious side. The future greatness of Rome, the poem predicts, will be founded upon the marriage of two races and two cultures, a wedding of urbane civilization to the old-fashioned virtues of the Italian peasantry. Honest and poor, as earthy as the soil he cultivated, the farmer-soldier held a special place in Roman political mythology. The battle of Actium was won on the plowing fields of Italy.

These fields—and their cattle—are the ostensible subject of Virgil's *Georgics*, the wonderful didactic poem that preceded the *Aeneid*. The *Georgics* might be said to wed together the artifice of Aeneas's shield to the content of Turnus's. Their refined verse and complex architecture contains a farming manual: the poem's four books treat grain cultivation, vineyards and orchards, the raising of livestock, and beekeeping. According to ancient sources, Virgil spent seven years composing the *Georgics* and finished them in 29 B.C.E., when he gave a preview reading to Octavian himself. By then Virgil had moved into the poetic circle of Maecenas, Octavian's political henchman and a great patron, to whom he dedicates each book of the *Georgics*. The poem ends with a strange myth in which a whole civilization—the miniature kingdom of the bees—is reborn out of a sacrificed steer. The fable seems to enjoin Rome itself to seek regeneration from its rural traditions.

Virgil's Italy and its farms needed regeneration. The conquests by the Roman republic in Greek-speaking Asia enor-

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mously enriched her ruling senatorial class and raised the political stakes too high for the republic to last. The ensuing civil wars saw Roman generals fight as warlords over the spoils of empire and usher in one-man rule. Octavian's victory raised hopes that the conflict was over, but was no guarantee. Book 1 abruptly ends with a chilling evocation of these fratricidal wars, with the prediction that future Thracian farmers on the fields of Pharsalus and Philippi will plow up the javelins, helmets, and bones of Romans who fought against Romans there. Italy's own fields had been similarly ravaged by warfare, and victorious generals dispossessed farmers of their lands to reward them to returning veterans. Tradition has it that Virgil's own family farm near Mantua was expropriated, and that the opening poem of his first major work, the *Eclogues*, retells how Octavian restored the property to him.

Quite apart from the upheaval of war, the small Italian farm was already under pressure as Virgil wrote. Enriched by the loot of conquest, senatorial families and members of the big business class, the so-called "knights," bought up huge estates that were farmed with slave labor. (Virgil does not mention slaves in the *Georgics*.) A whole century earlier, Tiberius Gracchus had addressed the Roman plebs in calling for land reform: "You fight to defend the luxury of the rich. They call you the masters of the world, but you have not a foot of ground you can call your own." The ensuing Gracchan reforms carried out by his brother Caius relieved the situation but did not reverse the trend, and the party politics that they inaugurated would fuel civil war.

Rich Romans bought up large estates not only for profit, but also to erect luxury villas that emulated the Hellenistic taste they found in the conquered provinces: mosaic floors, statuary, fish ponds, pleasure gardens. The frugal farmer and his austerity were all very well as a national myth, but who really wanted to live that way? The situation is familiar to Americans: the family farm and the virtues it fosters are regularly held up as a civic and patriotic emblem, while big agribusinesses replace them with the new indentured servants of migrant labor. A visitor to the ranchlands of the western United States will be struck by the new second homes and mansionettes dotting the range: fence me in, please.

THE *GEORGICS* MAY BE SELLING a return to a country life that had largely ceased to exist, but they are about more than that. They are certainly about more than instructions how to test soil or warnings to avoid roasting crabs in the vicinity of beehives. Virgil grew up on a farm, but his poem's information derives from other books, and it is not always reliable. The naturalist Pliny the Elder happily pointed out the errors that the revered poet had made about cultivating olives and other matters. It is recorded that Virgil gave a public reading of the *Georgics* in Rome. When he came to lines, in imitation of the Greek poet Hesiod, that encouraged his farmer to strip naked—"plow in the nude, plant in the nude"—a heckler completed the line in perfect meter: "and you'll catch cold and a fever."

The *Georgics* were, in fact, not written for farmers at all, but for an audience of poetry aficionados—for the same people who could afford the fancy villas. The poem is best understood as an amalgam of three poetic models: Hesiod, the Greek poetic school of Alexandria, and most importantly Lucretius, Virgil's Latin predecessor. In emulation of Octavian's own conquests in the East, Virgil announces that he is appropriating for Roman culture the *Works and Days* of Hesiod, a late eighth-century B.C.E. successor of Homer. This poem recounts two mythic versions (Pandora, the golden age) about how mankind has fallen into the iron age of work, and then sets out a kind of farmer's almanac, indicating lucky and unlucky days of the month for planting and cultivation, as well as a series of maxims about justice and piety. Hesiod set the model for all the ensuing didactic poetry of antiquity, and Virgil, with high ambition, proposed to write a new classic.

But the aesthetic of the *Georgics* is not archaic. It belongs to the so-called "Neoteric" Roman poets, who took inspiration from Alexandrian poetic models, particularly from the work of the third-century B.C.E. Greek poet Callimachus. This poetry preferred shorter, sometimes miniature genres to epic, as well as intricate verbal patterns and structures; it was intensely allusive to previous literature, and self-conscious to the point of preciousness. Virgil interspersed "digressions," magnificent purple passages of mythology and patriotic praise, amid the didactic material of his poem, and he artfully arranges the four books so that they mirror and echo one another. The potential gap between highly wrought poetic surface and the humble or even trivial subject matter of farming would have been welcomed by an Alexandrian poet, for it set off the poet's virtuosity to all the greater effect.

VIRGIL MARRIES HIGH ART TO serious content in the *Georgics*, to Roman gravitas rather than Alexandrian playfulness, and thus saves the work from turning into poetry for poetry's sake. He does so by taking on the greatest Roman poem of the previous generation, *De Rerum Natura*, or *On the Nature of Things*, by Lucretius. Written in epic hexameters, this philosophical poem in six books teaches the tenets of Epicurean philosophy. It is a sublime and terrifying vision of a universe founded by chance collisions of atoms in the infinite void of space and doomed to eventual dissolution, of gods who have no care for humanity (and therefore, for practical purposes, do not exist), of the compulsive mechanics of sex, of the inevitability of death as sheer extinction and the folly of belief in an afterlife. Lucretius describes his method of putting doctrine into poetry with the famous image of the honeyed cup that allows the bitter medicine to go down. Just how bitter this teaching can be is spelled out in the episode that ends *On the Nature of Things* and is a kind of test for its reader: a clinical description of the plague that struck fifth-century Athens. Mass annihilation is hard to swallow.

Virgil pays homage to Lucretius by concluding Book 3 of the *Georgics* with a similar plague that sweeps away livestock and human beings, a pendant to the human disease of civil war that ends Book 1. But the endings of Books 2 and 4 of the *Georgics* produce a countervision of human culture—embodied in the work of the farmer—making a place for itself against the brute forces of nature that lie both outside and within the human individual. This is the great theme of the *Georgics*, and it is how Virgil responds to Lucretius, even as he acknowledges and in no way cancels out the latter's dark vision. "Blessed is he who knows the causes of things," the narrator proclaims at the end of Book 2, praising the naturalist skeptic Lucretius or perhaps that poet's own master Epicurus, but "fortunate also is he who knows the gods of the countryside."

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The pious farmer suggests an alternative model for human happiness, not so different from the Epicurean ideal of *ataraxia* for which it substitutes, the withdrawal of the sage from worldly concerns into his private garden. The book closes with a vision of peacetime normalcy and self-sufficiency: the farmer seen in a rare moment of holiday relaxation, surrounded by his family, pouring a libation to Bacchus and, however fleetingly, re-living the golden age: "This is the way it was for golden Saturn,/Before the time when anyone had heard/The loud blare of a military trumpet/Or the clanging of a sword on the hard anvil."

Virgil quickly re-tells the fall from a Saturnian golden age toward the opening of the *Georgics*. Jupiter decrees an iron age of toil, and that is that. Two notoriously problematic lines declare the nature of things in this poem.

omnia vicit labor
improbus et duris urgens in rebus
egestas.

work conquered everything
Persistent/wicked work and urgent
want
in hard times.

The meaning changes between the two run-on lines: where first we feel that work will overcome all vicissitudes, that human art will triumph over nature and necessity, the addition of the adjective and the second subject suggests something like the reverse. This doubleness accounts for the nostalgia for a golden age that can be briefly recovered as a respite from incessant labor. Hence the poet's preference among plants for wild trees that do not need human care, among animals for goats that wander off on their own and still return with their udders filled with milk. Hence, too, the general movement of the four books from the intensive toil of agriculture and vineyards to more leisurely pastoral husbandry and finally to apiculture, where it is the bees who do the work.

Whether work is a blessing or a curse, whether the world is war and disease or culture and growth, whether the poem is pessimistic or optimistic about Octavian, about Rome, about life—these questions perennially debated by critics of the poem cannot be answered, because Virgil keeps the alternatives exquisitely balanced. That balance has made him, here and in the *Aeneid*, the most humane and perhaps the greatest poet of Western culture.

THE REMARKABLE FOURTH BOOK of the *Georgics* demonstrates this complicated sensibility in two episodes. Virgil interrupts his discussion of beekeeping, and his semi-satirical portrait of the bees' anthropomorphic commonwealth and civil wars, to offer a contrasting vignette of an old Corycian man growing vegetables and flowers on otherwise unproductive soil near Taranto. In David Ferry's translation:

But this old man
Carefully planted white lilies, vervain,
and poppies,
And different sorts of vegetables
for his table,
And thus he made for himself a
happiness
That was equal to the happiness
of kings,
And when he came home at night
his feast was free.

This is the Virgilian version of the Epicurean garden, a garden that must be constantly tended by labor.

But it is complicated by the foreign identity of the old man and what he is doing in Italy. The ancient commentator Servius tells us that he is one of the Cilician pirates whom Pompey the Great had conquered thirty years earlier; Pompey re-settled the pirates rather than crucify them or sell them into slavery. The old gardener thus carries some of the poem's political hopes as well as its ethical message. From a life of turmoil, he has settled into quiet usefulness and contentment, tamed by work and hardship, and even makes a thing of beauty in his flower garden, an analogue to the poem itself. But by now the figure of the happy farmer of Book 2 has been considerably reduced: there is no surrounding family, and this resident alien ekes out a subsistence living. Self-sufficiency is hard to distinguish here from existential loneliness—especially in contrast to the communal life of the bees. We can see in Virgil's old man a literary ancestor of Wordsworth's poor leech-gatherer.

The old gardener is the last real human figure glimpsed in the *Georgics*, which now turn to myth in their final section. Bees, too, it turns out, can sicken and die off, like the animals and the humans at the end of Book 3. A mythological fable now follows, a genre favored by the Neoterics, including the earlier Roman love poet Catullus. It explains the origins of the *bugonia*, a method for regenerating bees. At the loss of his bees, the rural demigod Aristaeus descends to his mother Cyrene's realm, an underworld that is the common source of the rivers of the world. Cyrene sends him to the seer Proteus, from whom he learns that the death of his bees was the result of a crime that he must expiate.

In a story within the story, Proteus reveals that Aristaeus has caused the death of Eurydice, the wife of Orpheus. That archetypal poet went down himself to the underworld of Hades and got Eurydice back with his song, only to lose her again when, in a moment of mad love, he looked back on her before they could reach the world of the living. After he was subsequently dismembered by the Maenads he spurned, Orpheus's head floated down the river Hebrus still mourning for and repeating the name of Eurydice. Cyrene now instructs Aristaeus to sacrifices eight cattle to Orpheus, and from their carcasses a new colony of bees is reborn. And with a brief envoi,

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the *Georgics* come to an end.

It is an episode of astonishing mythopoetic power, in which Virgil imitates Homer, his greatest predecessor, and points the way to the achievement of the *Aeneid*. At the heart of the contrasts suggested by its double plot is an opposition between the farmer Aristaeus, who travels to the wellsprings of life and restores a larger species, and the poet Orpheus, who cannot rescue his beloved from the waters of death. Life goes on, as the cycling of the seasons and the new spring celebrated in each book of the *Georgics* bear witness, but the individual perishes. Orpheus looks back for the unique named object of desire while anonymous nature moves inexorably forward. His love may be mad, but this capacity to know loss and not to accept substitutes defines the human. And poetry is defined by its giving a name to this loss and preserving it in song, the song that continues even beyond Orpheus's own death.

The poet of the *Georgics* identifies himself with both Aristaeus the cultivator and with Orpheus the mourner, but he opposes the two in the work's final simile, which describes Orpheus grieving for his second loss of Eurydice.

> He sang as the nightingale sings from the shade
> of a poplar lamenting her lost chicks that a hard-hearted
> ploughboy, spotting the nest, has taken before they fledged;
> she weeps all night and, perched on a branch, repeats her sad
> song, filling the night far and wide with her sorrowful plaint.

"*Durus arator*": Janet Lembke softens the point by suggesting that this plowman is a heedless boy (Ferry unaccountably mistranslates it as "herdsman" and misses the point altogether), where Virgil gives us the normative farmer-protagonist of the poem. The cultivation of the fields—and in this we should see an emblem of all human culture—commits violence against nature, including human nature. And the poet's task is both to partake in and to celebrate the work of culture *and* to register and to mourn its casualties, to take on the voice of nature.

The envoi to the poem suggests a different division of labor. Octavian is waging war by the Euphrates and giving laws to supposedly willing—*volentes*—foreign peoples. (American centurions, take note!) The poet is back home, disingenuously confessing to ignoble otium. While the soldiers were in the field, he has done nothing but write the *Georgics*! But Virgil has also been hard at work assessing the damage and the costs of empire: next on tap is the *Aeneid*.

THE *AENEID* IS VIRGIL'S GREATEST work, but the *Georgics* have long been regarded as his most perfect one: "the most complete, elaborate, and finish'd piece of all antiquity," wrote Addison in a preface to Dryden's translation of the poem into rhyming couplets. Dryden's version of 1697 is the gold standard among English translations of the *Georgics*, but a long line of renderings have tried to capture the poem's middle, conversational style, which smoothly shifts between higher and lower subjects and poetic registers: Virgil famously sings the praises of the Italian earth in Book 2 and immediately gets literally down to that earth, classifying its different kinds of soil.

David Ferry is a noted poet; he and Janet Lembke are experienced translators of the classics. They offer two new looks at the *Georgics* in American, rather than British, vernacular. As Lembke remarks, "In with grain, out with the corn!" (Sure enough, an appealing British translation of the poem by Peter Fallon that has also come out in the last two years begins, somewhat freely, "What tickles the corn to laugh in rows....") Ferry and Lembke have each produced an attractive and serious translation that gives English readers a good idea of the *Georgics*. The Ferry translation includes Virgil's text across the page for the reader with some Latin to compare, but the omission of line numbers impairs its usefulness. Lembke uses a longer line, with five stresses, and she uses the same number of verses as the original, and numbers the lines. She uses a great deal of alliteration to hold the line together, more than Virgil does, and that effect is more Anglo-Saxon than Latinate. Ferry translates into a loose iambic pentameter, and takes a much greater number of verses to unpack Virgil's lines; even so, he is freer and more summary of details, chaster in diction and perhaps closer to our idea of the classical than Lembke.

Ferry makes a number of untrivial mistakes. I have referred to his "herdsman" for "ploughman" above; "*Dodona*," which refuses food in Book 1, refers not so much to the oracle there but to oak trees (the oracle was in an oak) and their acorns; he terms Octavian a "young prince" where Virgil carefully calls him a "youth," since kingship was just what Octavian did not wish to be claiming, even if no one was fooled—it was OK for Virgil in the same passage to suggest that he was a god; Achilles had a team of four individually named horses, not a pair; the threefold repetition of Eurydice's name, much imitated in later poetry, becomes twofold, or fourfold, depending on how you count. Lembke bowdlerizes "plow in the nude" into "plow bare land," but is generally closer to the text and a better crib; her introduction and notes are much more extensive and helpful. One wishes that Yale had included a facing Latin text.

Here are two famous passages that give a sense both of the poem and the translations. First Lembke on a bull, defeated in mating combat, who bides his time and returns to the fray.

> And he tests himself—
> tackling a tree trunk, he learns to gather his rage
> in his horns; with repeated stabs he assaults the wind
> and practices for combat on sand scattered by his hooves.
> With energy collected and strength restored, he takes up
> the standards and races headlong at his oblivious foe,
> as when a wave begins to curl, foaming white, out at sea,
> it rises ever longer from the deeps and, rolling ashore
> tall as a mountain, crashes wildly on the rocks
> and collapses, but underneath, the water boils up
> in whirlpools and flings black sand high in the air.
>
> Every last species on earth, man and beast alike,
> the vast schools of the sea, the cattle and bright colored birds
> fall helpless into passion's fire: love is the same for all.

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This is Ferry on the rationality of the bees.

some say
The bees have drunk from the light
of heaven and have
A share in the divine intelligence.
For the god, they say, is there in
everything
In earth and the range of sea and
the depth of sky;
The flocks, the herds, and men,
all creatures there are,
At birth derive their little lives
from him,
And when they die their life returns
to him,
And having been unmade is made
again;
There is, they say, no place at all
for death;
The life of being flies up to the stars
And finds its place there in the
heaven above.

Lembke's long lines and enjambments capture the uncontrollable force of sexual energy that swirls up from below and redoubles itself, compelling beast and human alike. The bull's metaphorical "standards" suggests that the madness of human warfare, too, has dark erotic foundations: in a kind of inversion, Virgil will re-utilize this passage in the *Aeneid* to describe the war-lust of none other than Turnus with his cow-emblazoned shield. Ferry's unadorned cadences intone a serene, pantheistic hymn, along Stoic and Pythagorean lines, to the divine reason that informs the created world from above and denies the finality of death. Two very different versions of nature and of the human condition: the *Georgics* encompass both visions and structures of feeling, and find a poetry answerable to them.

From the Renaissance onward, poets were tempted to imitate the *Georgics*. The heyday of English georgic poetry was the eighteenth century and its self-anointed Augustan culture. Its representative work was the immensely popular *The Seasons* (1728–1730, revised 1744) by James Thomson, a poem that extols the agrarian backbone of Britain (read: the landed gentry) and contrasts improved farming and rural virtue to urban sloth and vice. Such poetry could ally itself in a general way with "Country" opposition to Walpole's political corruption. Still, as William C. Dowling has shown in an elegant study, it was in America that its full ideological implications could be explored. In the seven-part *Greenfield Hill*, in 1794, Timothy Dwight wrote the *Georgics* of the new republic. One of the "Connecticut Wits," Dwight would become a noted president of Yale College ("Pope Dwight") in the following year. The poem's Virgilian clothing sometimes makes an awkward fit, as when Dwight transfers the *Georgics*' praise of the happy farmer to the happy parish minister. But Dwight nonetheless ably captures Virgil's shifts of tone, as when the sight of a black slave interrupts an idealized vision of the New England landscape divided into small landholdings, whose industry produces a comfortable "Competence," but not great wealth.

Unlike Virgil, Dwight does not ignore slavery, which he goes on to excoriate in a proto-abolitionist passage that acutely describes the psychologically destructive effects upon the slave and graphically pictures the sufferings of slaves in the West Indies, a stand-in here for the American South and its large plantations. This is a slap at the country gentlemen Jefferson and Madison. (Dwight mourns, but is more resigned to, the destruction of Native Americans.) The peaceful small farms of Connecticut are contrasted to their great southern estates and to the perpetuated feudalism of Thomson's Britain, which they emulate, as well as to a despotic and war-mongering "East" that begins on the other side of the Atlantic.

See the wide realm in equal shares
possess'd!
How few the rich, or poor! how many
bless'd!
O happy state! the state, by
HEAVEN design'd
To rein, protect, employ, and bless
mankind;
Where Competence, in full
enjoyment, flows;
Where man least vice, and highest
virtue, knows;
Where the mind thrives; strong
nerves th'invention string;
And daring Enterprize uplifts his
wing;
Where Splendour spreads, in vain,
his peacock-hues;
Where vagrant Sloth, the general
hiss pursues;
Where Business reigns, the universal
queen;
Where none are slaves, or lords;
but all are men:
No nuisant drones purloin the
earner's food;
But each man's labour swells the
common good . . .

Here shall they learn what manners
bliss assure;
What sway creates it, and what laws
secure,
See pride abas'd; the wolfish heart
refin'd;
Th'unfetter'd conscience, and
th'unpinion'd mind;
To human good all human efforts
given;
No war insult, nor bondage anger,
HEAVEN;
No savage course of Eastern glory run;
Atchiev'd no conquest, and no realm
undone.

The bee figure gives away the Virgilian provenance. These American *Georgics* offer a blueprint for a new Rome, for an infant republic, where Virgil's poem coincided elegiacally with his republic's end. Egalitarian, self-sufficient, and community-minded, averse to vain consumption and imperial aggression: without such georgic principles, perhaps no free republic, in America or elsewhere, can long survive. ■

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Jollies

FORGIVE MY TARDINESS, BUT last month *The New York Times* published an article that compared liberals unfavorably to fundamentalist mobs. The piece appeared on the paper's fun op-ed page, on the occasion of the "cartoon riots" that were provoked by the publication in a conservative Danish newspaper of scornful images of the Prophet—no, that's not accurate. The riots were provoked by Muslim politicians and diplomats for whom the Western blasphemy was an Allah-sent opportunity to divert the attention of various Muslim societies from what ails them. What would modern Arab satrapies do without medieval Muslim masses? A bloodletting, then, followed by brandy and cigars; and the robed zealots in the streets are glad to do the work of the suited cynics in the private planes. Scores of people died in the cartoon riots. It was not the cartoons that killed them; it was their conviction that violence is a variety of cultural criticism. The intensity of their feeling about their faith was all that they (and in their view, anybody else) needed to know in the world.

AND THERE IN THE *TIMES* WAS Stanley Fish, extolling them precisely for this. How contrarian. Fish is the author of a book called *The Trouble With Principle*—now there's a danger!—and has made a handsome career as a cheap button-pusher; he is one of those intellectuals who prefers any kind of radicalism to any kind of liberalism. (The flourishing of such intellectuals is itself a great tribute to liberalism.) In this particular prank, the kind of radicalism that Fish preferred was the Islamist kind. He lauded the "strong, insistent form" in which the rioters maintained their convictions. They believed that there are ideas "worth fighting over to the death." This, he declared, "is to the credit of the Muslim protesters and to the discredit of the liberal editors." Liberals, by contrast, believe only in such "abstract" principles as free speech, which makes them contemptibly indifferent to "the content of what is expressed." He adduced as his example of this timidity the culture editor of the Danish newspaper, for whom what seemed to matter was not the substance of what his paper said but its right to say it. In the liberal "religion of letting it all hang out," Fish sneered, "everything (at least in the realm of expression and ideas) is to be permitted, but nothing is to be taken seriously."

THIS IS AN ANCIENT SLANDER AGAINST liberalism. "I'm liberal," declares a character in one of Frost's poems, and explains: "I mean so altruistically moral / I never take my own side in a quarrel." That is a benign version of the complaint that liberalism is invertebrate, purely procedural, lacking in fervent beliefs about what is true and what is false, what is good and what is evil. There were malign versions as well. Fish's exhilaration at the vitality of the crowd, his contempt for the restraints of reason, his discovery of personal integrity in physical violence—in another time, these were the ejaculations of fascists. Fish's piece has that *ni droite, ni gauche* quality. It put me in mind of some rhapsodic pages in *Among The Thugs*, Bill Buford's report on his arousal by the violence of English soccer hooligans: "Violence is one of the most intensely lived experiences and, for those capable of giving themselves over to it, is one of the most intense pleasures. ... What was it like for me? An experience of absolute completeness," and "being in a crowd in an act of violence ... [n]othingness is what you find there ... [n]othingness in its beauty, its simplicity, its nihilistic purity," and similar garbage. One is supposed to admire the honesty of such confessions, I suppose. But why should the drama of the confession matter more than the substance of the confession?

IT IS CERTAINLY TRUE, AS FISH WORRIES, that a liberal order exasperates certain types of "strongly held faiths." The believers in an open society always have some adjusting to do. Yet not all strongly held faiths are alike. Often the aforesaid adjustments are made, for the sake of principle or social peace. And a faith held so strongly that it acknowledges no legitimacy to other strongly held faiths, so that it seeks to suppress or to destroy them—surely such faiths must not be allowed to hide their depredation behind our toleration. They deserve all the exasperation that we can visit upon them. Moreover, not all strongly held faiths are held for reasons worthy of respect. (I mean intellectual respect. About political respect, there must be no doubt; but political respect is not a promise of intellectual respect.) Usually they are just the unexamined promptings of tribe and tradition. But then Fish is not exercised by the intellectual quality of the bellicose dogmatisms that he wishes upon us. Quite the contrary. What excites Fish about fervent belief is the fervor, not the belief.

FOR THIS REASON, IT IS FISH'S GEEKY paean to people who are happy to hurt other people, his anti-liberal envy of muscles, that is perfectly contentless. He recommends the radicalism of the Islamist protesters, but he does not care whether there is no God but Allah or whether Mohammed is His Prophet. The philosophy means nothing to him. He wants only the action. He mocks liberals as editors, but he is himself just a spectator. And he is demanding his thrills. He is living vicariously through the absolutism of others. Those are not the jollies of a democrat.

LIBERALS ARE NOT EDITORS, EVEN IF some editors are liberals. And fairness is not lifelessness. And free speech is the beginning of a liberal order, not the end. And rights are not the enemies of passions, and passions are not most stirringly represented by violations of rights. Where does Fish—not to put too fine a point on it, but in this respect he resembles some of our most virulent enemies—get the idea that liberals cannot fight? From the Democrats, perhaps; but that is liberalism's problem, not liberalism's fate. Anyway, Fish is not seeking political satisfaction, he is seeking emotional satisfaction in politics. And the history of emotionally satisfying politics is often a tale of crimes and abuses. The refusal to burn a book or a flag or a person, the renunciation of brutality in political expression, is not a sign of infirmity of purpose. Not at all. I wish to assure Fish, by example perhaps, that liberals can be—in the name of Kant, in the name of Jefferson, in the name of Mill—assholes.

LEON WIESELTIER

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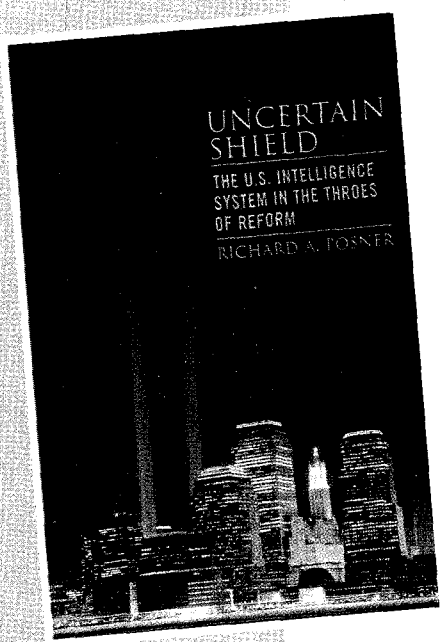

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***Richard A. Posner** is a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals in Chicago and a senior lecturer at the University of Chicago Law School. He is the author of* Remaking Domestic Intelligence.

Copublished with Rowman & Littlefield
2006, 256 pages, $19.95 Cloth
ISBN: 0-7425-5127-X

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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